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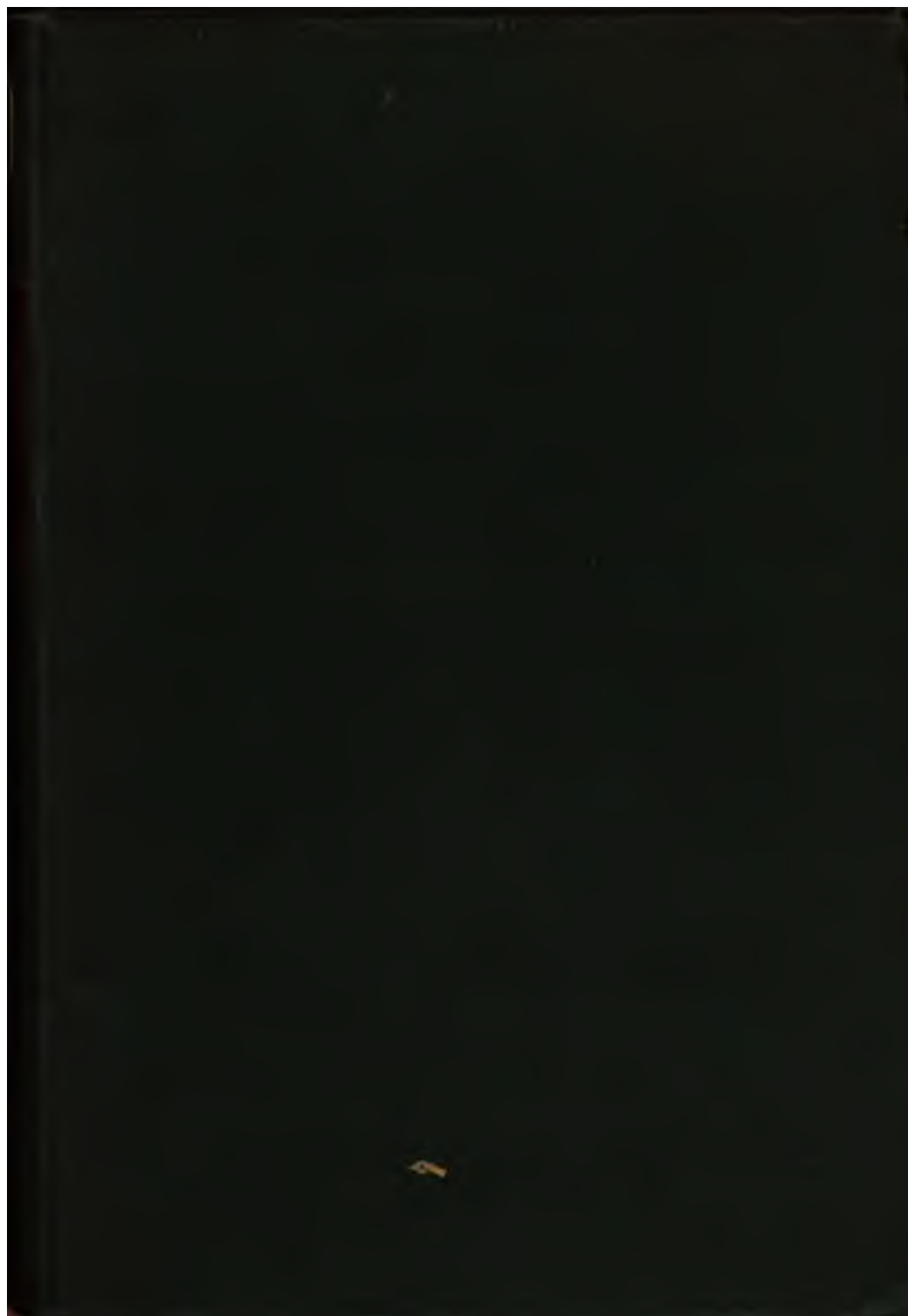
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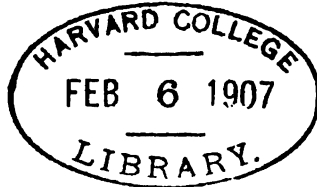
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CHAPTER I

CAPTAIN HEBERTON WADE

FEW men are better known in New York than Captain Heberton Wade, and that, of course, means in the whole country as well. He has never done anything to win fame, either in the world of letters, politics, or finance, but he is what in our democratic land is equivalent abroad to being noble—he is smart, extremely smart. And with him smartness is not a mere gilding over. It is inherent, inherited. He would not be called very rich in these days, for his income can hardly exceed one hundred thousand a year, and it also descended to him from his fathers. Indeed, he used to declare in all sincerity that from his fathers came everything of value that he had. There is an old saying, by no means proved, that it takes three generations to make a gentleman. Four were engaged in the matter of Heberton Wade, and they turned him out perfect. Of an old family, of comfortable means,

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of distinguished appearance, at thirty-eight he was a personage, but, in spite of his modesty, not for these things alone. His title was won in the quartermaster's department in our late war with Spain; he was one of the fastest polo players in the world and a daring cross-country rider; he had sailed two cup defenders to victory, and even at golf, in the days when it was proper, he always qualified among the first sixteen in the important matches.

As I write of him now I go back in my fancy to that time before we met the great company, when he and I looked upon life with the eyes of the men of to-day, when we judged men as men to-day judge themselves. Then I should have said that at everything worth doing Wade was a master. Let me say it now. The author will cry, "Could he write?" To such I reply, "Why do you write?" And here is the one answer: "To live." And beyond living you have dreams of your books selling by the hundreds of thousands till your royalties bring you horses, automobiles, and yachts. Some may write for fame when dead, but those who are sane work for comfort while living.

Perhaps the musician will protest. Poor genius! Heberton Wade is the master for whom you labor. What you create is his by right of his wealth and his rich friends. You have sung at his house, you have fiddled there, you have amused him and his

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gay guests, but when you took his check did you feel quite his equal?

So as I speak in the light of to-day I could give to them all the same answer, to art, science, and business. At everything worth doing Wade is a master. His fathers won for him what you struggle for, what you dream of giving to your children. Is it not worth doing—to stand at the tiller when the wind sings through the taut rigging and your sweet craft digs her head into the deep, tosses aloft the foaming brine, and lifts her nose as though to kiss the heavens? Is it not worth doing—to lean over the wheel all goggled and furred, your eyes on the road, while your car measures off miles as though they were inches, makes gullies of valleys and mole-hills of mountains? Is it not worth doing—when the air is keen with frost, to gallop over hill and plain, hard after the baying pack, taking wing at fence and hedge and brooklet? Is it not worth doing—to sit nightly at solemn feasts, flanked by solemn folk, talking solemn nonsense when the board is one from which the multitude is barred? Of course it is. These are the rewards for which you scrape and scrimp and struggle, give health, happiness, and even honor that though they may not be yours they will be your children's.

Therefore it is that I declare that Heberton Wade is an exceptional man. As such he is recognized by

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the world. When the scientists of the country gathered to do honor to the discoverer of the S-ray our captain was conspicuously placed among the guests. It was not because he had ever discovered anything himself or had ever done anything of any importance whatsoever, but he imparted to the occasion an indefinable tone that otherwise would have been lacking. The best brains wanted recognition from the best people, and that was what Wade gave, for he was always good-hearted and self-sacrificing. Later he appeared at the dinner where the country's writers paid homage to the master-hand among them, and somehow every one felt better for his presence. There was balance and sanity in his well-groomed dulness. Joining with the poor strugglers after fame and fortune, this man, who had never done anything, never had to, and never would, evinced a certain graceful condescension that was appreciated. Even when he visited the White House there was not a little comment. His act was taken as a harbinger of improved social conditions there; as a promise of guests better groomed and dinners better served at the first table in the land. The nation recognized it officially, and offered him a diplomatic post, that at St. Petersburg, I believe, but he wisely declined, realizing that the idle man makes the fewest mistakes.

Heberton Wade's refusal of a foreign mission

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was received with general regret. Men of his class, men who have nothing to gain by dishonesty, are what every government needs in its service. Such was the general feeling at the time. The dignified *Standard* voiced it well in its leader on the need of reform in our diplomatic service, concluding with this trenchant remark: "The difficulty is to make anything worth while to men of the stamp of Captain Wade. Indeed, it is asking too much to expect him to leave the New York life in which he is such a conspicuous figure to bury himself in some dull, tawdry, European court."

Now it might be drawn from these few remarks that my friend was weak intellectually. This is quite untrue and unjustified. We are prone to find consolation in the thought that those more fortunately placed than ourselves make up for their superabundance of worldly goods by a lack of brains. So we jeer at them. Often they seem to merit it, but the reason lies not in their intellectual weakness but in their intellectual inactivity. Wade was intellectually inactive, not weak. He had a brain and at long intervals he used it with effect. Once he even worked himself to so high a pitch as to put on paper in the form of a letter his reasons why the Panama Canal should not be built. The *Standard* printed it in the entirety of its two columns under the heading "Captain Wade Speaks," and later

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the journal commented editorially, saying: "But when we hear these views from a quarter so conservative, then we must indeed pause to listen."

I remember showing this editorial to Heberton at the Gotham Club. He was greatly pleased, and throwing one leg over the arm of his chair, he leaned back and blew smoke at the ceiling.

"It was the solemnity that caught them," he said. "I knew nothing of the subject, but I set it forth solemnly. If you would succeed, my boy, be solemn. Remember, the jester gets hardly more than the crumbs from the king's table. I never jest, and I am convinced that were it a necessity I could make a success in life."

Truly, if Wade had not been born a success he would have made himself one. In that very remark of his there was a touch of cynicism. We speak of humor as the saving sense. Cynicism is its twin brother. The optimist is never a humorist. At best he can be but a joker. Wade was never a joker. Whatever he did, whether dining with men of science, of letters, of statecraft, whether leading a *débutante* into the mazes of the dance or dashing over Hempstead Plain in the wake of a fox, was done with a certain solemn finish. But away down under it all, once you knew him, you found the saving senses.

It was always a wonder to me that a man of

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Wade's character reached the age of thirty-eight without at least a fling at matrimony. He had every quality that could be desired in a husband—money, looks, and family. Of course there were men in town of many times his fortune, but few of his admirable balance. He was not intellectual, as I have said, but he had a fair brain and knew how to use it. He never unveiled it. You saw only the crude outlines of it on the covering of reserve and never knew whether beneath was pure gold or hollow brass. For myself, I had suspicions, but perhaps prejudices, too, for we had long been friends. As his friend, I suppose I should know if he had morals. There are some persons who are prudish enough to inquire into that side of a man's character, and to such I can say frankly that I do not see how it could make any difference, and, again, that I do not know. I am sure that no scandal ever attached to his name; I never saw him sitting alone in the shadow of a theatre-box; he kept a pew at St. Edward's and occasionally passed the plate there. Moreover he never dabbled in finance, but rested content with his rents and the conservative investments made in his father's lifetime.

That Wade remained a bachelor was not because he had never had any offers—of that I am sure. From the day he came out he was marked for the

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sacrifice. A score of times I thought he was about to succumb and be led to the altar, to kneel, as at the block like some royal Charles, to receive the blow that would hurl him out into the grim reality of that matrimonial bourne whence so few return. It was a marvel that he escaped. When I recall the fair women who, to my knowledge, paid him devoted attention, I wonder how he held out so long. In his place I should have capitulated early and been led a proud captive to the chancel-scaffold. But he was strong, and when a man reaches his age free, chances are heavily in his favor for the rest of life.

It was therefore with surprise that I received at last his confession of weakness. Dropping in on him at his old house in Gramercy Park one morning, hoping to drag him forth for a walk in the brisk December air, I found him sitting moodily in his library, watching a fire that should have warmed the coldest heart.

"This life is a bore, a beastly bore, isn't it, Jim?" he said, lighting his after-breakfast cigar, the most luxurious smoke of all the day. "Here I am doing the very same thing as yesterday, and the day before—a smoke, a ride, a lonely lunch at the Gotham Club, bridge at the Wanderers, dinner with the Garricks, and finish off the day at a tiresome dance at the Hardings."

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"The ideal life," said I. "You were born at the goal that others fight a lifetime to reach."

"They have the excitement of the race," said he. "I—I have nothing."

"At least you are comfortable."

"Comfortable? Yes—as if comfort were the chief end of life."

"Then why don't you marry?"

Wade smiled. "Whenever I admit that I am horribly bored my friends advise matrimony. They seem to think that all I need is a change. Perhaps they are right."

He sent a spire of smoke circling into the air, one so long that I knew it as more than a mere vapor cloud. It was a visible sigh, deep drawn.

"You are in love," said I sharply.

"In love," he snapped. "Nonsense! At my age a man does not love—he simply marries. I have never given love a thought, but I admit that the idea of matrimony does appeal to me, now that I am getting old and can't take the keen interest in life that I did when it was new to me. Marriage would be a sort of adventure."

"You should have married long ago," said I. "I am surprised that you have held out this long."

"I am single now simply because my father did not leave me a wife," returned the Captain grimly.

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"He left me everything else. I can't see why he did not provide a wife as well. I have never expected anything in this life unless it was left in a will. The money, the house, the servants—all were inherited. They even say that I look exactly like my father and have his manner. His will never mentioned a wife for me, though, and I suppose it never occurred to me to look for one myself. Why, Jim, even the cook was his, one of his rewards for a long life in Wall Street."

"And the butler," said I. "Don't forget old Griggs."

"Poor Griggs," said Wade. "He has worn out at last. I had to retire him. He got so he couldn't totter up and down stairs any more, and I let him have the lodge on my Long Island place and pensioned him. By the way, have you seen his successor?"

The question came by a sudden thought. Wade arose to press the bell, but there were footfalls in the hall, so he withheld his hand.

"Morton," he called.

"Yes, sir," came the answer.

Framed in the *portières* that led into the adjoining room was the most distinguished-looking servant I have ever seen. But for that obsequious response, I should have arisen to await the presentation of a guest. He was tall and well built,

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having none of that corpulence that comes of much dining in the butler's pantry. His face was ruddy, but it was the brown of sun and wind and not the purple of sluggish blood. We are apt to expect the butler to appear the statesman, but it is simply because he is clean-shaven. Morton was, of course, clean-shaven, but he looked neither the statesman nor the butler—not the former, for his face showed no marked intellectuality, either real or assumed, and the black hair slightly streaked with gray was parted and brushed with a care that spoke of pettiness; not the latter, for the features were too finely cut. Many generations of gentle folk do not always smooth away the coarseness of the form or feature, but look at some men and you know at once that they were gently bred. It was thus with Morton. He was servile; the sombre garb of his calling fit him ill; yet as he stood there, erect, respectful, attentive, I felt instinctively that man for man the servant was as good as his master.

“You called, sir?”

Wade nodded. He wanted to give me time to inspect the new treasure, and it was a moment before he spoke.

“I shall lunch at the club and dine out to-night,” he said, “but to-morrow evening have dinner here for six at eight o'clock.”

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"I remember, sir," the butler replied, a suspicion of a smile lurking around the corners of his mouth.

"Of course you remember," returned Wade good-humoredly. "You wrote the invitations."

An astonishing task for a servant, I thought, and my wide-opened eyes amused my friend greatly. He laughed outright, and Morton smiled gravely, showing very fine teeth.

"You needn't say anything about it, Jim," said the Captain; "but he hasn't very much to do and helps me wonderfully with my correspondence."

"Thank you, sir," said the butler.

"That reminds me," the master went on. "You have declined those Tuesday and Wednesday dinners, of course—previous engagements. Write to Mrs. James that I shall be unable to spend next Sunday with them at Far Hills. That is all—Harris knows that I shall be back at seven to dress for dinner."

"Very good, sir." And Morton turned and slipped softly out.

"Where did you get him," I cried.

"He was a find," Wade replied. "A perfect gem of a servant! Knowlton sent him to me, and since I have had him these two weeks I have not known what trouble was. Everything is looked after. He has pensioned off old Jane, the cook—

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father's, you know—and put in her place a Frenchman who turns out a dinner fit for a Nero. He has discharged all the women and engaged two excellent men, so all I have left of my old ship's crew is Harris—Harris, you know, is the valet my father willed me. Of course in a house of this size with only a lone man to look after, there has not been much to do, and I have been using Morton as sort of a social secretary. The man is a wonder. After a few lessons he learned to produce a note that is as good as anything that ever came from my own pen. But I am too comfortable to be happy. I have nothing to growl at. There is no seasoning in my diet of life."

"I cannot help regarding that man with suspicion in spite of his virtues," I said. "He looks like a gentleman. If it wasn't for his clothes——"

"My dear Jim," interrupted Wade, "Morton came to me most highly recommended. You need have no fear about his being a gentleman. Why should he not be distinguished-looking? He is probably the product of many generations of gentle butlers."

"Grant that then," said I, "and let us return to the original subject under discussion. You are unhappily comfortable, you are not in love, and yet you are contemplating matrimony simply for a change. A remarkable prospect!"

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Heberton smiled feebly. "I suppose I should have married long ago," he said.

"Why didn't you?" I demanded.

"Because I have never been able to be in love with only one woman at a time," he replied. "My infatuations have been many, but always with twos and threes, and when the crisis came I simply didn't know my own mind, and as a consequence here I am at middle age actually deciding to go hunting for a suitable mate."

"Have you anybody in mind?" I inquired blandly.

"Several," he answered solemnly.

"Well as long as you can go out this way and choose deliberately, act with your head perfectly clear, your judgment unbiassed, and your eyesight good, let me advise against haste," said I. "Use the same care that you would in purchasing furniture. It is absurd the way men pick wives. They do it with one-half the concern they would show in selecting a sideboard, and yet in a well-appointed house the mistress is of the greatest importance. How many women match their husbands well? Why, the average pair are a shock to the artistic sense. They violate every law of harmony—harmony of color, harmony of proportion, harmony of sound, for even their voices add to the general discord."

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"Do you mean to propose that I engage an art critic to assist me in the pursuit?" snapped Wade.

"Precisely," said I. "The whole tone of your home and your life hereafter will depend on the choice. I think I can say without turning your head that you are sufficiently good-looking to have a pretty wife. Black or auburn hair would match yours best, and you being rather dapper, she should be slender and within about three inches of your height, bringing her bonnet to the level with your topper. You have a rather resonant bass voice, hers should be tuned low to harmonize. You have——"

"That is all very good," interrupted Wade. "We might look well together to-day, but how about ten years hence?"

"A fair question," I replied. "Here is another reason why you should use judgment. The problem is one which complicates the choice of a wife so greatly that most men go in blind, declaring that marriage is a lottery. It needn't be. Study the mother. Much of the future can be learned by studying mothers. If she weighs over two hundred, ask her if she was slender in her girlhood. She will always tell you. Has she a double chin, or is she gaunt and haggard? Does her voice——"

"I never realized before what possibilities there were in the choice of a wife," Wade interposed.

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"Why it will take me months to decide where to begin courtship. Suppose you help me. I'll take half a dozen options, have them all to dinner with their parents, and we can look them over together."

"I should be delighted to assist you in any way," said I.

"While I am choosing, I might as well get a woman who is perfect and will keep," said he. "And after all, Jim, though it was hard at the time, I am just about as well satisfied now that I waited till my critical judgment was developed. When I look around and see some of the women I have married, I wonder what was the matter with my mind at the time."

"Naturally," said I.

"For I, too, had loved many women in my day earnestly and devotedly. At the early age of eight, I believe, I came under woman's influence. At my first dancing lesson a little girl in pink, with white stockings and shoes, standing across the room from me, sucking her thumb, looked my way in a fashion so appealing, so melancholy, that I forgot that I could whistle through the vacancy in my teeth, that I could pitch a curve and turn a hand-spring, and sidled up to her, and without a word led her forth before all the world. Then there was to be but one woman for me forever. She was the grown-up of that child of seven. But, woman-like,

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she laughed at my devotion. She wearied of me. A black-haired boy, a burly, curly fellow to my mind, supplanted me, and love turned to cynicism and the boy lover to a girl-hater. She is a grown-up now. Her husband is a fat banker, and she has herself become so stout that the two of them fill their victoria to bursting. Not long ago I saw the pair driving toward the park, and the man laughed at the boy of eight, and smiled contentedly as he thought of what might have been, but had not. But the cynical period of boyhood was brief. There came a laughing, black-eyed girl, the only one in all the world the boy could ever have really cared for, and being in his teens his dreams were nearer realization than in the old time. School came. The stern duties of the term drove her from his mind. She is a college professor now, or a literary woman, the man does not know which, but when recently he saw her picture in a magazine he laughed again at the boy and smiled still more contentedly. So boy and man have weathered many storms of sentiment, each one seeming likely to be the final undoing, each one followed by a calm of single blessedness, with golden clouds hovering over the sea on which he floats, careless and happy. Calm and tempest, tempest and calm, so we drift through life till that harbor is reached toward which we all seem to set our course, willy-nilly,

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sometimes to find there peace and rest, sometimes to find it rougher than the open sea.

So I divined Wade's meaning. "You probably were out of your mind," I said. "A man in his normal state is the cold and calculating creature that I find you to-day. You are to be congratulated. I hope that when the time comes that I must follow you in the steps you contemplate I shall be in the same perfectly sane condition. Now as to the 'several'—name them."

Wade hesitated.

"Hurry," said I. "Name them."

"Well, what do you think of Caroline Garrick?" he replied.

"Impossible!" I retorted. "And I do not suppose for an instant that she has ever been in your mind. You are not blind."

"Mary Harding, then," he said weakly. "How do you think she would do?"

"You are not deaf," I answered calmly. "But why dodge this way? You ask my advice and then will not tell me who the 'several' are."

Wade arose and glanced elaborately at his watch.

"I'm sorry I can't walk with you, Jim," he said, "but I am to ride this morning with Georgianna Cowles and it's late now."

"She then is the 'several,'" I cried. "You need name no more. A girl of beauty, a girl of wit,

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a girl of sense. But from what I hear I am afraid you are too late. You know young Bob——”

“Perhaps I am too late,” Wade interrupted, speaking calmly. “But it won’t make any particular difference.”

CHAPTER II

GEORGIANNA COWLES

A GIRL on horseback had come galloping into the life of Heberton Wade.

He might look me full in the eye, as he did that morning, and declare that it might make no particular difference, but I knew better, for I knew Georgianna Cowles. A girl in a ball-room is an indeterminate creature. She may be angelically ethereal, she may be ponderous matter, yet you know her as hardly more than the composite of a name, of floating drapery, of color, of roses, of inane remarks. But Georgianna was very real to me. I had sat at the family board in the days when she was just allowed to dine there, never permitted to speak. Often in the country we had ridden together, she on her piebald pony and I on my gaunt hunter. Then when she came out, and appeared shy and full of fear at her first dance, I took her under my protecting care and waltzed with her dutifully, and brought up three men and presented them, and promised to bring more and to come around whenever I saw that she was alone and in

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distress. Could Georgianna have looked in her mirror that night! In vain I tried to reach her side again. Patiently I stood by her vacant chair in the little group that always hovered there; time and again she came whirling out of the maelstrom, but always to be seized by some one bolder and quicker than I, and danced away. At last in one of those panting pauses between the figures I fought my way to her.

"Georgianna," I said commandingly, "you must let me take you in to supper, as I have something I want particularly to say to you."

"I am so sorry, Jim," she replied with grandeur, "but I have already promised another man." The callow youth at her side stared at me triumphantly. "Bobby Lee is going to join us," she went on, "and one or two others, and if you care to you can come along."

Georgianna needed me no more. I owned it with reluctance and slipped away to join the old boys at the club.

Heberton Wade was one of the three that I presented, but he hardly more than noticed her. To be sure, he did honor her by taking her just once around the room, but it was not to be expected that he should do more than this. He is really always charming to young girls. He used to say that about the only good he did in this world was in being

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kind to *débutantes*. Possibly he danced with Georgianna a half-dozen times after that without knowing even her name. Then she came galloping into his life.

We were riding in the park, ambling along in easy, pleasant fashion, side by side, when she came galloping thus. I knew her far off. The roan horse, the slender figure, erect, easily poised, strong and graceful, were unmistakable.

"It is Georgianna Cowles!" I exclaimed with pleasure as she came swinging on, for I had not seen her in several days.

"Looks rather attractive from here," said Wade nonchalantly. "Do I know her?"

"You do," I snapped. "Rather attractive? Well!" For it sounded so absurd to me.

Now she was abreast of us, and the Captain was all smiles and bows. Little wonder!

"Hello, Georgie!" I shouted.

"Hello!" she answered cheerily, and brought her horse down to a walk.

"You are not riding alone?" I asked, swinging my own horse around and jogging up to her side.

"Joe is somewhere," she laughed; "but he always pokes, and I just ran away from him. I shall circle the reservoir and catch him again. Come along."

And along we went, galloping—galloping hard

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in the crisp December air, three good fellows, in the silent *camaraderie* of the road, full of the joy of life, the muffled hoofbeats making for us the sweetest of music. All too soon we saw Brother Joe ahead, bouncing around on his stout cob. He heard us, halted at the corner where the path winds off to the Plaza, and watched as we came thundering up.

"Come along," cried Georgianna. "One round more—just one more."

"Hanged if I will!" shouted her fat brother. "You will kill that beast the way you run him. It's time we go home."

"Let us take it at a walk then," said Wade in his most pleading tone.

But Joe rudely wheeled and turned into the byway.

"The obstinate brute," I cried, shaking my crop at the fat figure in retreat.

"Joe is all right when you understand him," laughed the sister. "He perfectly hates riding, and it is awfully good of him to come out with me at all, but if I leave him now he will never do it again. Good-by."

She spurred away after the deserter.

Wade and I rode on in moody silence, our horses at a walk. It seemed as though the sun had gone behind a cloud, as though the wine had left the

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wind, as though the world had grown gray and listless.

My companion spoke first. "I remember that girl now. It is curious that I never noticed her particularly."

"Not at all curious," I returned. "You have danced with her, perhaps a half-dozen times, but no man ever learns a woman in a ballroom. You get only passing glimpses there. She talks inanities and you respond in kind. She smiles alike on a score of men. She hardly knows your name. But in the saddle it is different. Saddle friends are the best of comrades. There is a communion in the silent gallop over the country road; there is a jovial fellowship in the sharp trot; there is a quiet companionship in the walk in which even the horses seem to join. You ride with a girl along the wooded lanes, both good fellows, and you can learn her every mood if you range far enough together. Now, Georgianna and I have long been saddle friends."

"You know her well then," said Wade smiling.

"I helped her when she mounted her first horse," I returned proudly.

"Perhaps you are her godfather," said he with a malicious light in his eyes.

"No," I answered, unruffled by the insinuation of my own great age. "I am of a bit later date

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than that. But you may be interested to know that she does call me her goduncle."

"Her goduncle!" exclaimed my companion. "What is a goduncle?"

"As the godfather has a care that the child enjoys the next world, the goduncle sees to it that this is made pleasant," I explained. "It is certainly a privilege to have so delightful a godniece as Georgianna. Sometimes my duty takes me with her to the *matinée*, again in the machine for a long spin into the country, broken in the middle by a lunch for two at some quiet club, and still again on a canter up Riverside Drive on a brisk winter afternoon."

"And never a chaperon?" inquired Wade.

"Never," said I. "Why, I almost went to college with her father."

"I like this goduncle idea," murmured my companion, after a long silence.

"Only one is allowed," I exclaimed forcefully.

"Then I shall apply for a cousinship," he returned coolly. "Moreover, I shall apply at once and we shall begin to-morrow, when she will ride with me."

And Georgianna did! They rode together often after that, becoming fast saddle friends. Brother Joe encouraged it. He dropped gracefully out of those morning rides and took his exercise in one

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of the broad windows of the Wanderers' Club. Sometimes I would join him there and we would see Wade fly by in his machine, parkward bound, but our emotions on such occasions were far different. The brother worshipped Wade. To him the Captain was a good-hearted fellow who relieved him of an onerous task. Georgianna was all right when you understood her, he would say, though she had a woman's obstinacy with a sprinkling of deviltry that set her a-galloping simply because she knew he was fat and abominated any gait faster than a walk. He believed that she was considered quite good-looking. That might well be, but when you really knew her you found that she had some sense too, though at times she did seem to take particular pleasure in hiding it. Still, she was a mere child yet, and a few years more would improve her wonderfully, quiet her down, give her poise and stability. I think Joe really looked forward to the day when his sister would weigh two hundred pounds. They would be boon companions then.

To me the Captain was the best of fellows, but for that very reason I viewed his assumption of cousinship with disapproval. Of course there was not the slightest chance that the girl would care for him as other than a boon companion. He was older even than I. But my duties toward her were very dear, and it nettled me to share them with another.

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I always regarded her with a brotherly affection—I knew her too well to love her. And is it not good to have in this world some one to whom you are not really related by ties of blood, yet who holds you as kin, who telephones that she wants you to do this for her, or writes that you must do that, who, when she is not at home to others, pours your tea in the quiet of the library and tells you all that is in her mind and heart, one whom you can advise, whom you can scold, whom you can warn?

Now came that astonishing confession of his on the morning when I dropped into his house on Gramercy Park. I am not a blockhead. My mind went rapidly over the few weeks since he had first met Georgianna in the park, and perspicacity was not needed to shatter the fiction of the "several." Perhaps he did have several girls in mind, but I knew them, I knew the charming three—Georgianna of the ballroom, the dignified, high-headed, creature, almost ethereal; Georgianna of the saddle, trim, devil-may-care and laughing; Georgianna of the library, closing her doors to a half-score dapper youths, to discuss philosophy with her two old cronies—three persons, all different, all delightful, and yet one—a glorious trinity. He might laugh, as he did, and say that it mattered little if he was late, but I knew better. I saw beneath the jester's mask, and the realization that he

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was in earnest came with the force of a blow. It was to be expected that some day the girl would marry, but her choice would be a shallow youth of whom I could not be jealous. Wade's appearance in the new light was unlooked for and uncalled for. Georgianna and I had been company, yet when he joined us and made a crowd I was forbearing. He was now violating every law of the fraternity and threatening to break it up forever, so I had a right to be angry. I should have rushed in ahead of him and sought by every means in my power to thwart him, but he had taken me unawares and disarmed me completely. I might preserve my nonchalant demeanor, but the fiction about young Lee was a poor counter move. It merited the calm disdain with which he met it. We spoke jestingly, but each of us was conscious that beneath our jibes was more of truth than we cared to disclose.

So Wade and I parted smiling. We parted friends. But had I the time then I should have rushed to Georgianna and pleaded with her that if she thought of ever marrying a middle-aged bachelor, a man of nearly twice her age, a staid person of thirty-eight, to look before she leaped—to look at me. There was not time. Wade rode with her that morning. They left the park and ranged far into the upper quarters of the city, and he, with discretion, said not a word of the subject that was on his

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mind all the while, but now jovial, now serious, revealed himself to her in many lights, the boon companion that he was. He chose his time wisely, the afternoon, when in the quiet of the library she made him tea, not on the heyday of the road where with a turn of the rein she could have cut short his avowal by galloping from him. The moment she entered the room Georgianna divined that something unusual was impending. Be solemn when you would succeed was Wade's motto, and he was living up to it. He knew that he was facing the crucial moment of a man's life—when he proposes for the first time—and he intended that on his part there should be no flaw. He had even costumed himself as best his wardrobe would allow, for, thanks to the absurd styles of the day, a man has but one graceful garment, and that is his bathrobe. When trousers came in we had to stop kneeling.

There is something knightly in kneeling. By the act alone more is expressed than in a storm of words—brute force subjected, pride broken, strong will overwhelmed by the light in a woman's eyes. A Launcelot pleading thus would touch the coldest heart, but as well fancy him leaving his helmet and sword with the butler, seating himself on a spindly French chair and opening with a statement concerning his income and prospects as to imagine

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Captain Wade on his knees, his coat-tails gathered ungracefully about him, the edge of his boots marking the rug, while he sighed forth his passion. Nowadays a lover must turn lawyer and argue his case. Wade knew that. Moreover, he realized that a man of his age, however famous and rich, was handicapped when he set out to demonstrate to a girl of twenty that she should become his wife. The conventional frock-coat of the afternoon made him look double his age, and after three attempts, occupying almost as many hours, he settled on the most youthful attire he possessed, a conspicuous check, which he further enriched with a very red tie. This, with the seriousness of his face as she found him standing moodily over the fire, warned Georgianna, and she collected her wits and held them in close control.

"You are early this afternoon," she said, seating herself at the tea-table.

Wade cleverly cornered her there with his arm-chair, cutting off her only way of escape. He had intended to begin at once before what he planned to say became confused in his mind, but the servant entered with the tray, and his departure meant a return with the cake.

"I came early for a particular reason," the Captain began at last, when the man had left them in peace.

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"One lump or two?" inquired Georgianna, staring into the cup.

"One lump," replied the ardent suitor. "I wanted to speak to you about a matter that has been——"

"Cream?" broke in the girl sweetly.

"None—it is just right that way, thank you." Wade took the cup, and after a scalding sip, abandoned it on the table. Now he leaned toward her with a very determined gleam in his eyes. "Something has been on my mind," he began again, very incisively.

"Well, Jim will be here at five," said she, glancing meaningly at the clock.

"Confound Jim!" snapped the Captain, when he saw that his time was limited to fifteen minutes. He needed thirty to present his case fully, for the suit was one that once begun he was going to win. "Jim is always around when——"

"Don't swear at Jim," cried the girl. "He is bringing me some books. Have a bit of cake?"

"Georgianna," returned Wade severely, "do you realize that I am trying to propose to you?"

"I suspected it," she answered solemnly, leaning back to listen in an attitude of careless attention.

"Suspected it!" cried Wade. "Of course you have been proposed to before then?"

"Yes," she said, "but never intentionally."

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"This is intentional," the man said earnestly. "It is absolutely premeditated. It is serious. I have been going over the matter for two days and my mind is made up. I want to demonstrate to you that our interests in life are such that our mutual advantage——"

"This is a demonstration then, not a proposal," said Georgianna, calmly eying him.

"Exactly," replied the Captain. "The proposal is made now. I never expected you to accept it off-hand. There is no reason why you should, for as yet I have done nothing to make you care for me. I have not even told you that I loved you—that will be reached later." Wade smiled grimly, and Georgianna laughed, for what she had feared as an ordeal was made very easy by the unusual way in which the Captain offered himself. "Absolutely the first thing I have done that might awaken any regard on your part is my proposal," he went on. "Such an avowal as this generally has no other effect than to put the man in the girl's mind. That is the purpose of my visit this afternoon. You see, I am frank. I want to warn you that though you may refuse me now I shall keep right on offering myself until either we two are married to each other or to somebody else. Have you any objections to my plan?"

"None at all," Georgianna answered. "I like

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it immensely. Up to the present I had thought of you only as one of my good friends, like Jim, but of course after this you may get on my brain."

"You are thoroughly sensible and matter-of-fact," said Wade. "That is one reason I like you and why I think we could get along so finely. I have passed the romantic age. I have been in love dozens of times and have always recovered easily, so I know now that should you refuse me absolutely I might feel uncomfortable for a time, my vanity would suffer perhaps, but I should soon return to my normal condition. My regard for you is intellectual. You are the only woman I ever cared to marry, for I've found you the best of comrades. A man and wife should be companions, good fellows, and surely you and I are, Georgianna." The argument was coming freely now, earnestly. "I am a little older than you, but what is a matter of eighteen years if we agree in everything, if we like each other? You would have no cares, no petty worries, no haunting fears of a to-morrow of poverty. My whole purpose in life would be to protect you. The world would be ours to ride over and to sail over. With all the means to enjoy life, surely we could be happy in a partnership."

"You talk as man to man," said Georgianna.

"Exactly," said Wade. "I am trying to be frank

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and sensible. I am studiously avoiding all idiotic sentiment."

"But when a man talks to a woman—" began the girl.

"He is usually expected to be foolish," he interrupted, grimly smiling. "I suppose if you consent to let me press my claims for you, I, too, shall become foolish—if you demand it. But I like to think of you differently. I like to picture you just looking me frankly in the face, saying simply that you will go on with me, that the comrade I have known in the past few weeks will be mine always."

"You are doing better now," said Georgianna, gently.

"Suppose we try," said he. "If you think you might consider, ride with me in the park tomorrow. At ten, if I see your horse waiting, I shall know that you are coming. I shall know that there is a chance for me, that you are thinking it over, that——"

"That you are on my brain," said Georgianna.

"Will you?" he asked eagerly.

"Here is Jim!" the girl exclaimed, rising. "I am so glad you came, Jim. We were both counting the minutes till you got here."

Wade was not so cordial in his greeting. He shook my hand with forced effusiveness, but lapsed into a pathetic silence when I dropped comfortably

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into the place Georgianna made for me at her side and assumed over her an attitude of protection.

"Well, Georgie," I began calmly, "I heard this afternoon that you were engaged to young Bob Lee."

"Nonsense," she returned laughing. "He hasn't even asked me, and of course a girl can never tell what she will answer until she is actually asked."

"He will all right—trust me for that," I said. "His purpose was in his eye when I saw you with him the last time. A man's eye always betrays him. I can't think of anybody who would suit you so well as Bobby Lee. He has money, looks, no brains nor family, a minor matter nowadays, and he is just the right age for you—about twenty-four."

Wade began to shift uneasily in his chair. He half arose and then sat down again abruptly.

"Will you come downtown with me in my machine, Jim?" he asked suddenly.

"Why, I've just got here," I returned blandly. "My tea isn't even made yet. You go ahead and I'll trot along later and meet you at the club."

"Oh, I'd just as lief wait," said he, settling himself again. "I have nothing to do."

There was no getting rid of him. In his gloomy silence, in his attitude as he sat there with arms folded, glaring at his boots, hardly listening even

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to our chaff, answering testily when addressed, and never speaking unless spoken to, there was expressed grim determination. He was simply brutal. We could not ignore him, for his personality was too positive. Try though I might to forget him, I failed. Half turning my back, I sought to engage the girl in mutual reminiscences that were very personal and could have no interest to him; she responded desperately, but lacked concentration, became distrait, and began to cast covert glances past me. Wade looked too well without his knowing it. He doubtless believed that he was making a fool of himself, but I knew better. The clothes, chosen with design, had taken ten years from his life, and in his petulance he seemed boyish. Ignorant of what had preceded my appearance, it was still easy for me to divine that something unusual had happened, that though he might not as yet have spoken a word of love he was now making a most forceful appeal. Such rudeness would have a charm for the woman who knew its cause.

I fought him a half-hour and then surrendered, but only when I saw that of the three he alone was thoroughly at ease. He knew that I would not go till he did, and go he would not unless I went with him. His purpose was plain. The minute I was on my feet he was at my side smiling grimly.

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"Come," I said, "you promised to take me downtown."

"But I think I shall stay a little longer," said he.

"Then I'll wait for you," I retorted, edging toward my seat.

Wade saw that I was as determined as he. He laughed. Outwardly we were all jesting.

"Come," he said, and moved to the door. He let me pass him, and stepped back toward Georgianna.

"To-morrow," I heard him say, "I shall look for you, then, to ride with me."

"But I do not promise to be there," said Georgianna quietly. "I may not—and yet I may."

CHAPTER III

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THE old Wade house in Gramercy Park is one of the expressionless brownstone fronts on the north side. It is hardly correct in describing it to say that it was designed. Like thousands of its kind whose sombre rows were long a characteristic of New York, it must have been simply built. Climbing the high stoop you entered a narrow hall and found on your right a great oblong drawing-room; behind that was a windowless cavern that seemed to have no purpose other than to be stumbled through when you went out to dine; in the rear was the dining-room, large and well lighted, giving a view of a small yard and farther on of skyscraping structures in whose hundreds of windows women sewed all day long. In its general plan, the second floor, where the master really lived, was like the first. The library, facing the south and the sun and overlooking the park, was charming, and unspoiled by the hand of woman. Comfort was here; solidity and simplicity was the spirit that prevailed. The few pieces of furniture were

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of massive mahogany. In the centre stood a table, distinctly a man's, for it was made to spread over as one wrote, and a hundred utilities were at the hand, from a dictionary to a cigar-cutter. Beneath the feet, the red rug was moss-like in its thickness and softness. By the fire two chairs, with wide-open arms, invited you to their deep embrace, and from them you looked up into the soft eyes of a royal stag that somewhere had fallen to Wade's rifle. Such trophies of the hunt were all about the walls, with here and there a well-chosen picture that carried you into the great out-of-doors, to the mountains, the river, and the sea.

In this comfortable apartment I sat a while with my friend after we had left the Cowles house together. What passed between us there is of little moment now, for it in no way affected the extraordinary events of that night and the succeeding weeks. We chatted amicably, though there was a certain reserve between us, and when at last we parted he stood at the head of the stairs calling a cheery farewell as I went out of the door. He then returned to his place by the fire and for a half-hour sat watching the flames. Seeing the hands of the clock indicating the hour of seven, he arose hastily and called for Harris, the valet, who at that time should have been near at hand. The summons brought no answer, so the Captain pushed aside the

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portières and was surprised to find darkness beyond. Advancing, he groped about a moment till he could turn on the light, and he now stood in that most interesting of apartments, the dressing-room of a well-dressed man. Sombre presses and high chests of drawers alternated around the walls. These, with a table and a tall pier glass, before which stood a straight chair of oak, made up the simple furnishing. A wide door, heavily curtained, opened into the bedchamber, into which the Captain now proceeded, calling for his valet. Unanswered, he rang the bell with angry insistence, and Morton appeared.

"Where is Harris?" demanded the master.

"He is sick, sir," the butler replied apologetically. "Pardon me, sir, but I forgot to tell you when you came in."

"Harris sick?" cried Wade. "Why, it must be the first time in years. What is the matter with him?"

"Nothing serious, sir," the other answered. "Indigestion, I think, and he will be all right in the morning. He asked me to do his work, and I have drawn your bath and laid out your clothes." Morton pointed to the table, where, ready to be donned, was the master's evening raiment in perfect order. "I'll help you."

"Oh, it is all right," said Wade good-naturedly.

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"But you should have told me about Harris sooner, for dinner is at eight, and it is a long way uptown. I'll call if I need you."

Morton retired softly. Wade did not call. He often boasted that he was accustomed to roughing it and in any emergency was fully able to take care of himself. This was an emergency. He enjoyed his own independence, and in a half-hour stood erect and smiling before the glass surveying himself. This final inspection was interrupted by a gentle knock. The butler appeared again.

"Did you call, sir?" he asked.

"No," was the reply. "Still you might just look me over to see if I am all right."

Morton made a careful survey of his employer. "There is a bit of dust on your back, sir," he said.

Another knock, and Albert, the second man, appeared.

"Is there anything I can do, sir?" he inquired politely.

"I am certainly getting the best of attention," Wade answered, laughing. "I guess I am all right."

"There is a bit of mud on your pumps, sir," said Albert, getting down on his knees and dusting vigorously around the flawless soles.

"Is the back of my hair perfectly straight, Morton?" Wade had a hand-glass and was trying to

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twist himself so as to bring the doubtful spot into view.

He got no answer to his query. The light went out. An arm was thrown around his neck and both hands were seized in a hard grip. He tried to cry out, but his jaw was forced shut, and a desperate effort to kick was frustrated by Albert, who had his legs in close embrace. His weight carried his assailants to the floor with him, but he was underneath, pinned there by a knee that pressed his chest. The hand was lifted from his throat and he caught his breath again.

"You blackguards!" he gasped.

"Captain, be quiet and we will do you no harm," came in a clear, calm voice from above him. "Talk quietly, if you must talk, but don't shout and compel us to knock you on the head."

To struggle more was useless. Wade was overpowered by odds, it seemed to him, of ten to one. Hands were reaching at him everywhere from the blackness. He felt them at his throat, ready to throttle him if he cried out; at his wrists, holding them vicelike while they bound them; at his ankles, which seemed now to be caught in clasps of steel. His assailants worked in silence and quickly.

"Are you through, Albert?" came again in the clear voice.

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"Yes," was the answer. "The shackles are all right at the feet."

"The cuffs are on, sir," said the fellow at the chest.

"Captain Wade," came from above, "we regret that we have had to use you so roughly, but our business required it. We intend you no further harm of any kind, and simply say that if you behave like a gentleman you will be treated as such. Shouting will do you no good. This room was built for crime, and your cries cannot be heard from it. So will you be quiet or must we gag you?"

"I will be quiet," Wade answered, realizing the hopelessness of further fighting.

The weight was lifted from him and he could breathe more freely, but he could move neither hand nor foot. The lights were turned on, and he looked up into the faces of his assailants, not ten but three, and they his own trusted servants, now standing gazing down at his prostrate form.

Wade was calm. "You have me," he said. "Go ahead and ransack the place—my money is on the dresser with my watches; the house silver is all downstairs—take it and get out, the whole crew of you."

"You cannot dismiss us that way," said Morton

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gravely. "We purpose to stay with you yet some weeks, and it is our wish that at least you will be comfortable. Albert, bring the Captain a chair."

The surprise of Heberton Wade at this quiet assurance was almost as great as at the first onset. When the light went out and he felt the arm around his neck, he realized instantly that his own servants had turned upon him, and that there could be in their attack the motive of robbery only. In the struggle he had hardly thought at all, but now as he lay there quiet and helpless, his mind flashed back over the weeks past. Evidently he was the victim of a carefully planned assault. Everything pointed to a well-devised scheme. Morton, once in the household, had taken complete control of it and worked to this end, so now the master lay helpless at the mercy of the gang. That the ruffians treated him so gently was a wonder. They could have pounded him into eternal silence with safety, for his cries would have been well muffled by the walls and heavy hangings of that windowless middle room. Yet instead of reaping the benefits of their work and making off with the booty that lay at their hands, they were standing over him, studying him as physicians would a patient. Wade was no coward. Further physical fighting was senseless, and he had recourse to his wits. The men showed a disposition to treat him fairly, and while

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at first a stream of epithet pressed upon his heated brain he kept it in control, and contented himself with eying them contemptuously.

Albert brought the Captain's favorite chair, and he was lifted into it like a child. He examined his hands to find them held fast in ordinary steel cuffs; he lifted his feet to see the glint of steel shackles about his ankles. Then in the long glass he got a full picture of himself dressed immaculately for dinner, his clothes a little ruffled but not noticeably—and he sitting in his favorite chair the prisoner of his servants! The absurdity of his plight was such that he could not repress a grim smile.

"Morton," he said, turning to the butler, "you are a clever scoundrel."

"Thank you," returned Morton, now dropping the obsequious "sir," but speaking gravely. "I am pleased that you are behaving so well. We felt sure that if treated like a gentleman you would conduct yourself as one."

"Is this a joke?" cried Wade in sudden hope.

"It is far from a joke," was the answer, given so seriously as to leave no doubt. "It may seem such to you, but you need have no fear of that kind. Were you in the hands of an ordinary gang of criminals, you would now be here alone calling for help and we should be far away with your valuables." Morton sat down in the other chair, facing

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his victim. He added: "Perhaps you would like to calm yourself with a cigarette. Hawkins—the cigarettes from the other room."

This was no longer the respectful servant. He was the master of the house. Wade watched him fascinated, and wondered how he had ever considered the fellow a mere menial to answer his beck and call. As the rogue sat before him smoking nonchalantly, talking easily, he seemed more a man of the world, a clever lawyer or a diplomat, than a leader of criminals, one who could stoop to so treacherous an assault. In Albert, too, there was a change. Wade had hardly ever noticed the second man, but now he turned to him, and studying him one moment, saw much that strangely enough he had never before observed. The rascal was above his livery. He had none of the anæmia that comes from domestic service, but his face was a deep brown, his eyes quick and clear, his figure slender and athletic, and of its strength and the power of the arms the Captain had already had good proof. Hawkins, standing at the other side of the chair, seemed a ponderous brute. His heavy features, his small eyes, his great hands, clenched as he stood alert for any sign of a renewal of the struggle, were the accustomed attributes of one of his calling. He did not smile in the confidence of his superiority, as did Morton; he had not the

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serious attention of Albert, but glowered at the victim.

Wade was satisfied. He was in a bad position, and must make the best of it. He took the proffered cigarette and puffed at it with much difficulty, but it did sooth his nerves.

"What gang is this that you rule, Morton?" he asked in a cutting voice.

"It is not properly called a gang," replied Morton quietly. "There are a few things that I am willing to tell you to set your mind at rest, Captain. This occurrence may seem to you an ordinary one, viewed as criminal history. As a matter of fact, you are not in the hands of common thieves. Not one of us has his picture in the Rogues' Gallery. Such a thing would lose us our places at once. We are wise. Crime as a means of earning a livelihood has long been in the control of the uneducated, the dull and brutal classes. There have, of course, been instances where men in high places have turned criminals, but these are sporadic. People guard themselves only against attack from the vulgar, and this general blindness has made much easier the operations of our company."

"Your company!" exclaimed Wade, in astonishment at the term.

"The Advanced Robberies Company, Limited," replied Morton gravely.

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"Do you mean to tell me that I am being assaulted and robbed by a corporation?" cried the amazed Captain.

"We are not chartered," replied Morton, after emitting a thoughtful ring of smoke. "You can readily see why that is impossible. I have given you the full title. Ordinarily we speak of it more simply as the Robberies Company, as I believe we are the only concern of the kind yet in existence. We discard the word 'gang' as vulgar—distinctly vulgar and savoring of unnecessary brutality. We admit that we are criminals, but as doubtless you are convinced by this time, we have a just claim to a higher order of intelligence than is usually found in those convicted of crime. We are men of education—of culture, too, I might say, and it is this fact that has made our company so successful and makes it so terribly dangerous to society." The speaker arose and stood menacingly over the Captain. "Mark this, though—we are men of determination. It is our purpose to use you in our work for some weeks. You will not be robbed. As long as you behave you will not be harmed. The issues at stake, the risks we run, are too great for us to use gentle means to frustrate any effort you may make to escape. Every minute you are in our control you will be watched. The company never sleeps. It tries to work by gentle means, but once

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they fail it has no heart—it is, indeed, a soulless corporation. Do you comprehend?"

Wade nodded his head in gloomy acquiescence.

Morton went on in gentler voice. "Though we are dishonest, we are honorable men. We wish to treat you as an honorable man. You have only to give us your word that you will not cry out or make any effort to leave this room, and we shall relieve you at once of those uncomfortable shackles."

Wade's answer was a hearty oath. Would he give his word to a gang of thieves not to use every means to escape them and bring them to justice? Never! He would sit in this chair and starve to death first. To emphasize his defiance he leaned back and glared contemptuously at the master-rogue.

"Very well, then," said Morton quietly. "You will have to be uncomfortable. Albert, watch this evening. If the Captain makes any trouble, press the button twice."

He turned and left the room, followed by Hawkins. Then, as if by a sudden thought, he stepped back.

"Captain," he said politely, "it may relieve your mind to know that I have sent word to Mrs. Garrick that illness prevents your dining there to-night. I have recalled the invitations for the dinner here to-morrow. Good-night."

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The man seemed to frustrate his victim at every point. The very moment before there had flashed to Wade's mind a suggestion that awakened hope, for his non-appearance that evening would arouse inquiry by his friends. That hope was gone. In truth, there were keen wits in the company! Its agents had been in his home only two weeks, yet in that time they had burrowed their way into his life and were in position to control his every move. He realized at once that the butler, who had been acting as his secretary, could allay every suspicion aroused by his disappearance from society; the telephone was in his captors' control; inquiries at the house would be answered by the suave servant, of whose virtues he had boasted to his intimates. A bachelor confined to his rooms by illness was not so extraordinary an event as to warrant rescue parties or even close investigation. The very boldness of their act made the rascals' work easy, for the seizure of so well known a man in his own home and his confinement there for weeks while a gang worked out their ends was new to criminal history.

And what were the ends? This question came suddenly to Wade. Why, if the men planned robbery, were they proceeding in this extraordinary manner? Why had they not long since fled with the rich booty that the house offered and left him

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to suffer until aid came? He could think of no reason for them to seek his death. Had they one, he would hardly be sitting now comparatively unharmed. Here, indeed, was a puzzle that was past his solving.

Wade appealed to his guard, who though smoking a cigar with apparent unconcern, was keeping a close watch on him.

"Albert," he asked, in as insinuating a tone as he could command, "how are you planning to rob me?"

"If I could tell you, I would willingly," replied the other, as if sincerely. "The truth is I do not know. I am simply one of the company's agents. There are many agents, and the directors never acquaint them with their plans. Mr. Morton is a director. Will you dine now, sir?"

In this last question, so politely put, Wade saw a taunt.

"Dine!" he cried, lifting his manacled hands in despairing gesture. "Will I give my word to a pack of thieves? Never!"

And he settled back to starve. Albert shrugged his shoulders, smiled slightly as if in pity, and smoked on nonchalantly. Wade could not endure the fellow's quiet eyes. He turned from him and crouched in his deep chair, fixed his gaze on the wall, grimly determined that no mere call of hunger

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should break his spirit. Only the ticking of a little clock disturbed the silence of the room. It called his eyes to it, to see the hour hand cross eight. Now he should be guiding some charming woman into dinner; now he should be toying disdainfully with blue-points; now sipping his sherry. How different the reality! Here he was, bound hand and foot, in his own house, doomed at least to days of captivity, as much a prisoner as though grovelling on a bed of straw in some mediæval dungeon, the victim of that mysterious company of whose ways he had seen enough to cause him dread. But was there a company? Could it not be a fiction to arouse his fear? Still, company or no company, it mattered little. These men were not ordinary criminals. They worked with soldier-like precision, carrying out a plan laid weeks before, and making every strategic move with unfailing accuracy and cunning. Enigma though their purpose was, he doubted not that they could accomplish it. He was powerless.

Powerless? Physically Wade was perfect, a clean-limbed, hard-muscled fellow. For him to submit meekly to such an outrage in his own house was absurd. He knew his strength. He knew that man for man he was as good as any of these rascals. Hampered though he was he would fight, and would show them that his was no chicken heart. He

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could rise to his feet, but that was all. To take one step was impossible, so closely was he shackled. Seeing the prisoner standing there, erect, defiant, brought only a smile to the face of the guard. That calm smile doubled Wade's rage and he lifted his bound hands, clenched, and shook them.

"Come over here, you coward," he cried, "and I'll pound you within an inch of your life."

"Possibly," returned Albert, not stirring. "I have no notion of giving myself any useless trouble. And why do you, Captain Wade? Can't you realize that you are helpless?"

"Of course I am helpless," retorted Wade. "If I were not do you suppose you would be there leering at me?"

The smile left the other's face. "Pardon me," he said. "I did not mean to irritate you. But you had best make the most of your situation. You will not be harmed. Sit down, please. There is no sense in your tiring yourself."

"I won't sit down," returned Wade defiantly.

"Then I am sorry that I shall have to make you."

"Come try it."

The guard ran no such risks. He stepped to the bell and rang twice. Quickly but quietly the summons was answered, and instead of one Wade had to do with three.

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"What is the trouble?" Morton asked, looking from the prisoner to the guard.

"The Captain is disposed to fight," Albert answered. "He wants me to make him sit down."

"Captain Wade," said the master-thief, in a tone of pleading, "don't drive us to force. What can you do against three, bound as you are?"

Wade looked from man to man, then raised his manacled hands.

"Some day," he said, "we shall meet when my fists are free. For the present I suppose I might as well sit down."

He sank into the chair and sat there regarding Morton with contempt.

"That is sensible," said the other pleasantly. "We hope that you will soon decide to dine. It is absurd for you to starve when a good dinner is waiting your word."

The prisoner did not answer. He was powerless. At that moment he knew that he must break soon, for pride cannot fill an empty stomach. But when Morton appealed again, he was met by a cold stare, and left the room, so that Wade was alone with his guard once more.

The clock hand crawled on and on. The hour was ten. Still defiant Wade watched the silent Albert. The fellow took from a pocket a leather case filled with fine long cigars and held it toward

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him. The very sight was nauseating. The inner man was joining with his tormentors. The pampered stomach had become an agent of the mysterious company to break the prisoner's spirit. Wade had never starved before, but for another interminable hour he suffered, till his brain grew sick and body triumphed over mind.

"I will dine, Albert," he said grimly.

"We have your word that you will sit quietly if your hands are freed?" asked the guard.

Wade nodded.

"Very good, sir," said the man woodenly.

He rose and rang the bell.

Hawkins answered.

"The Captain will dine," said Albert stolidly.

"Very good," muttered the other. He disappeared, and when he returned in a few minutes Morton was with him. They placed a table before the prisoner's chair, spread over it a white cloth, and set upon it a simple but handsome dinner service with scrupulous care. Then Albert came with two cocktails on a tray. At a sign from the master, the cuffs were taken from Wade's wrists, and he grasped the proffered glass.

"Your health, Captain," said Morton, drinking ceremoniously.

Wade's sense of humor overcame his anger. He laughed and drank. His spirits rose. A plate of

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delicious soup quieted the inner man, and in the comfort of the moment he forgot the moment's perils, for the sole hint of his position were the chains that rattled when he moved his feet.

Morton seemed gratified at the change in his prisoner, and became now a gracious host. "You can have anything you wish to drink, Captain," he said. "But let me advise against champagne. Champagne requires open air and a walk next day, which I regret we cannot give you. Suppose you try some Château Lafite, '71, an excellent wine."

"A good suggestion," said Wade, looking up from his fish. "This is a splendid sauce, by the way. Andre's, of course."

"Andre is one of the company's best cooks," replied Morton smiling.

Wade laughed outright. "The company's cuisine is perfect," he said. Glancing at the three men standing as if to anticipate his every wish, he added grimly, "The company's service is certainly of the best."

And the company spared no pains to make him dine well. The wine, the food, the coffee, and the fragrant cigar worked wonders with his mood. When the débris of the repast had been cleared away, he sat smoking almost in contentment. The situation now seemed less irksome. Indeed, it had

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a certain interest for him, for he always loved adventure. This evening surely was full of it. The idea of a company into whose power he had fallen had a fascination, and he complacently accepted its existence as a fact. If it meant him any harm, it was proceeding in a strange way. He was safe, no doubt, and could find keen interest in watching the mysterious plan unfold.

What was that plan? Again Wade found himself puzzling over it. Again, his mind, though clearer now, could find no solution of the puzzle.

He appealed to Hawkins, who was on guard.

"If I could tell you I would, Captain," the man answered gruffly. "But I am only an agent. The directors never confide in us. I understand, though, that we shall be here about a month longer."

A month? Wade laughed. A month of this strange captivity would certainly be an adventure. Sufferings such as these would be worth enduring for the very novelty. He might as well compose himself and make the best of it, as Morton had advised. He could even enjoy it. If he was safe, if his property was safe, what could be feared? Nothing.

He remembered Georgianna! To-morrow at ten, at the Plaza — she might be there and he missing.

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"Hawkins, I must see Morton," cried Wade, rising in sudden excitement.

Morton came.

"I want to send a note," the Captain exclaimed. "I must—I must." And he shook his fist to emphasize his demand.

"To whom?" asked Morton quietly.

"To—to a young lady," stammered the prisoner.

"It is impossible!" Morton said curtly. "The risks are too great; the interests involved in this enterprise are too important. The company would never sanction it." He turned. At the door he paused. "Hawkins," he commanded, "when Captain Wade wishes to go to bed, ring three times."

CHAPTER IV

GEORGIANNA PONDERS

MRS. OLIVER COWLES was a quiet soul. Her mildness was just tinged with sadness. Life with her seemed a gentle sigh, long drawn. Sometimes she smiled, but it was a passing light. Did you ask her whence this settled melancholy I doubt if she could have answered. You might imagine that in her more than forty years she had known nothing but trouble, yet she could have laid her finger on no great sorrow that could have cast her into this state of weak dejection. There had never been a death in her immediate family, which is generally a cause for felicity; her four children were dutiful; moreover, they were charming, with the exception of Joe, and he was harmless though fat. She had a model husband, with no interests between his office in Wall Street and his house uptown. Reading, visions through the printed page of the sufferings of others, and much meditation thereon, a critical view of the world and a contemplation of its mysteries might have cast a shadow, but Mrs. Cowles seldom read,

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and much less reflected. The universe held no mystery for her. It offered no puzzle worth working over, but was simple, readily understandable, and rather commonplace. If you asked her why she existed she would have told you without hesitation, answering "because" or "the church teaches us." Did you press her further, and inquire whether or not in her opinion life was worth living, she would have replied with equal candor, "Not for persons of moderate means." For to their own view the Cowleses were of moderate means, and perhaps there lay in this a part of the cause of the good woman's mild melancholy. Had she been born poor she would have had something to complain about and something to strive after, but the monotony of a comfortable life palled and she missed the excitements which riches buy and poverty furnishes free. Yet there was no sign of poverty about the Cowles home. In the newest part of the town, in that delightful region that lies east of the park and within sight of its verdure, though crowded into a space hardly twenty feet wide by more pretentious neighbors, it was nevertheless thoroughly presentable both inside and out. The family kept horses, and they had a place on Long Island, but with that they reached the limit of an income which was surely no greater than was required for mere respectability. Twenty years ago

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they would have been considered rich, and while their fortunes had not changed for better or worse, it was just a little irritating to see friends moving from modest brownstone fronts downtown to corner palaces on the upper avenue, and adding unto themselves cottages at Newport, yachts, and automobiles. Oliver Cowles was a conservative man. While he never lost any money, neither did he accumulate to such an extent as to allow his wife to keep pace with the advancing standard of her own set. To do her justice she never expected that he would and never demanded it. She accepted the situation, folded her hands, and sighed. Sometimes her husband would suggest cheerfully that he might be able next year to import a sixty horsepower machine like the one that the Garishes were driving, but she never met him half-way. What was the use of talking about things they could not afford, she would say, especially when they had to bring out the second of the girls; if in the Lord's own time these things came to them, well and good, but she had long since given up expecting anything better in this world than what they had started with. Joe had once given promise, but he had waxed fat and lazy, yet he was too thoroughly good to be complained of. The girls were attractive and might marry money, but their mother would cherish no high hopes. Declaring this she would study

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the rug with gentle resignation—a peculiar disposition you may say, but after all not an unpleasant one. It was more endurable by far than perpetual cheerfulness. The shade, for a long walk, has its quiet and charm, and at times there is more rest in the cool shadows than in the glare of the sun.

The proposal of a man like Heberton Wade would have aroused most mothers to a high pitch of enthusiasm. Not so with Mrs. Cowles. She received her daughter's confidence with her usual complacency. She was taking her morning coffee at that moment, and did put down her cup and gaze placidly at Georgianna, but with no evidence of elation.

"Well, dear, what of it?" she said softly.

"Ought I to take him?" asked the girl.

"I leave that entirely to you," replied Mrs. Cowles, sipping her coffee as though her sole interest lay in her cup.

"But I don't know what to do," cried Georgianna. "I have been worrying over it all night and here I have only an hour left and I cannot decide. He said he would get on my brain and he surely has."

"Well, since you ask my opinion, I will say that if your father were dead and a man of Captain Wade's fortune and character proposed to me, I

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should certainly take him at once," said the mother, with a firmness unusual for her. "But as for you, my dear, I have never dared to expect anything better than to have you marry a poor man simply because you loved him."

The girl leaned her elbows on the table, and resting her chin on her clasped hands gazed steadfastly at her mother.

"Tell me," she said, "didn't you care for Father when you married him?"

"Certainly," was the answer, given with some spirit. "But when your father proposed to me the first time, I thought no more of him than you do of Captain Wade. That got him on my mind and I could think of no one else. Here was the situation—a man wanted to marry me, a thoroughly presentable man as men go—he had plenty of money in the figures of that time—a woman should marry—I should love him, for a woman should always marry for love—so I sat down and made up my mind to do it, and I did."

"Was it not hard, Mother?" asked Georgianna softly.

"At times—yes," Mrs. Cowles answered with complacency. "But I was firm. Your father and I have always been devoted. It simply shows what will can do. There is not the slightest doubt that if you would just make up your mind to it you

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could love Captain Wade in a week, and it would be a splendid thing for you. We are poor, you must remember, my dear, and he is very well off; he is good-looking; he is extremely nice in every way. Dozens of girls would jump at such a chance. Indeed, he has long been one of the best catches in town, and it is a great compliment to you that after reaching his age he should offer himself to such a mere sprig of a girl."

"That is just it," returned Georgianna. "Think of his age. He is almost old enough to be my father."

"What difference are a few years?" returned Mrs. Cowles. "He is about thirty-eight and you are twenty. When you are fifty he will only be sixty-eight, and probably the better preserved of the two. When you are——"

"When I am ninety he will only be a hundred and eight," the girl interrupted. "No, I do not suppose it will make much difference then."

"Certainly not," was the gentle rejoinder. "The question of a slight difference in mere years is a very unimportant one. The real problem in these days is whether or not the man can afford to love you. There is no doubt about Captain Wade—not the slightest obstacle in the way of a very happy marriage. You could make him leave that dreadful old house of his downtown and buy something

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new in this neighborhood—something like number ten—I understand it is for sale—and you would be near us. A woman must marry some time, and it is best for her to do it when her heart is free and she can use judgment. You——”

“But, Mother,” began Georgianna.

“You ask my opinion and then try to prevent my giving it,” said Mrs. Cowles plaintively.

“Then go on—do, please.”

“You use judgment and your future is settled. I don’t want you to think that we would get rid of you, my dear—far from it—but you are sure to go some time, and would it not be better to move into a house near us—like number ten—than to some suburb? The course of true love does seem to run suburbward. Now——”

“But, Mother——”

Mrs. Cowles frowned severely. “If you will allow me, I shall finish what I was saying. Love is the beginning of very few really comfortable matches. They are——”

“Look at the Hardings,” cried Georgianna.

“Willie Harding was a very good catch until the panic in Northern Pacific,” Mrs. Cowles returned. “You must remember that Carrie took him before that and made the best of it afterward. Your father was just remarking the other day that one of the accompaniments of a rising market was

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always an enormous number of engagements. Now when stocks are declining you will notice——”

“I am not interested in the relation between stocks and love,” said Georgianna laughing. “Captain Wade is not a broker.”

“Which makes him doubly attractive,” cried Mrs. Cowles. “Your happiness would not depend on pools and cliques, on shorts and insiders, all those people your father complains so much about. There can be nothing more wearing on a woman than a house that fluctuates with the market. Look at the Gilsons—one day the butler is dispensed with for economy, the next there are two men in livery loafing in the hall all the time; one week Helen is rolling around in an imported palace car, and the next she is using cabs only when it rains. Now with a husband in real estate——”

“Your views as to what I should do are very evident,” Georgianna said, rising and glancing at the clock, where the hands marked nine.

“Certainly,” said the mother smiling. “But I do not expect you to follow my advice and so shall not be disappointed. Of course, Georgianna, you do not care for anybody else?”

The girl stared at the clock. “I have an hour left in which to make up my mind,” she said quietly.

“You could do it in much less time than that,”

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declared her mother. "Just think a moment, dear. Suppose you did refuse the Captain; suppose you did indulge yourself in these romantic ideas that young girls are so apt to have—then it is ten chances to one that you will become attached to some man who is not half so desirable. The men you meet out all appear to be about on the same level, and it is a matter of pure luck whether you suddenly find that your life's happiness depends on a good-looking one with nothing, a plain one with millions, or a genius with an awful reputation. Now to me there is something very sensible in the way the Captain proposed to you—no foolish raptures—no silly pretences that you are all the world to him—no promises made and none asked. His offer is put so sanely. He admits that he does not care for you now, or you for him, and yet he sees every reason why you could be thoroughly congenial. Then, says he, let us see if we cannot love. So, Georgianna, as I understand it, if you go riding with him this morning you will be making a tacit admission that you are trying. How sensible!"

"Thoroughly so," said Georgianna solemnly. "But to me it seems too sensible, for sensible things are never exhilarating. As Jim was saying the other day, it does seem as though the fools enjoyed life most."

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"A man of Jim's age has no right to talk that way to a young girl," cried Mrs. Cowles. "He is a dreadful cynic—or thinks he is—for cynics are mostly poseurs. Pay no attention to his railing. Remember what the church teaches us—that to be happy in this world we must be resigned—resigned to do good or nothing at all, and then in the next we shall have our reward, though in what shape I can't exactly make out."

"You do so cheer one up, Mother," Georgianna said laughing. "But as I started to say, Jim——"

"Please stop quoting Jim," snapped Mrs. Cowles. "He is only a pessimistic old bachelor."

"Not so old as Captain Wade," returned the girl with spirit. "I would quote the Captain just to please you, but he never says anything that I can remember."

"An admirable trait. If anything is tiresome it is women who are always quoting their husbands." So Mrs. Cowles settled all.

Again Georgianna appealed to the clock. It was getting perilously near ten, and yet at that moment she was as far from a decision as when the afternoon before Wade and I had parted from her in the library. She went to her mother's side and looking down on her said gravely: "You have not helped me a bit. My head tells me that you are right, but it is hard to follow the dictates of the

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head if you are hampered by a heart. I suppose I am foolish and full of romantic ideas, but it is pleasant to fancy that when you do marry it will be a man with a big, strong body and a big, strong brain, who can protect you with his arm and enrich you with his mind; that he will be handsome, with a face that is a part of him and not a mere mask; that he will be a good companion, as well for a walk along quiet lanes as on a gallop across country, as well with a look in a library as on a yacht in a spanking breeze, as well watching the drama of the street as in a box——"

"You want a genius," cried Mrs. Cowles.

"Never!" said Georgianna with spirit. "Geniuses are too one-sided. They can seldom stay on a horse or sail a boat or handle a car. Out of their own atmosphere they are uninteresting. A man should have balance; he should look well, dress well, think well, and talk well; he should have sentiment, guarded by humor; he should enjoy society because he realizes its very absurdity; he should measure his own success by what he has in his head, not in his bank. Put simply, he should be a gentleman."

"Then I never saw a gentleman," said Mrs. Cowles, "and you, my dear, will have to find a husband in heaven. Rid yourself of such grand ideas. Make up your mind that if you find a genius he will

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have long hair and a dreadful name; if a rich man, he will be a bore; if one who looks well, he will not think at all; if a real splendid, dashing fellow, handsome, brave, brainy, all that women love, he will not have a cent. Now, really, Captain Wade comes nearer——”

Joseph's heavy voice sounded from the head of the stairs, cutting short this argument.

“Georgie, if you are going to ride with Wade this morning I must order the horse.”

Georgianna looked appealingly at the clock, which seemed to be pressing her hard for her answer.

“It is high time you dressed for riding,” said her mother, as though the whole matter were decided. “Of course you will give the Captain a try anyway.”

Georgianna did not answer. She went out of the room and up the stairs, slowly, in troubled thought.

CHAPTER V

DR. ARDEN CARRIES HIS POINT

WHILE Georgianna Cowles was pondering thus over the problem that is the greatest any woman is called on to solve, Heberton Wade was sitting up in bed gazing thoughtfully at his manacled hands. He had slept well, a quiet dreamless sleep, undisturbed by any fantasy such as might be expected to haunt the rest of one in his situation. He had awakened to call for Harris, after the habit of years, and Morton had come and stood over him, gazing at him with the quiet eye of possession. Then flashed to Wade the realization of his captivity. In the first vagueness of the waking moment, he knew only that he had been attacked in his own home and made a prisoner, that here before him was the ringleader of the outrage. He forgot that he had not been harmed, that he had not been robbed, that he had been treated with every courtesy, that he had dined well, and had been put to bed with the solicitude of nurses for a child. He saw within his reach the clever criminal who had enmeshed him, and with a cry he

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sprang at the fellow. But the company had taken no chances. Just such an outbreak as this had been anticipated; he would awaken like a man in a nightmare and clutch at the spectres that throttled him; but he was not dealing with mere dread shapes, and in a minute he would realize it. He did. After that convulsive effort with his helpless hands, he sank back on the bed again, now fully alive to his predicament, and lay there silently eying his jailer while he gathered and wove together the scattered threads of his memory.

"You called Harris," said Morton quietly. "I am sorry, Captain, but under the company's orders your man is a prisoner in the trunkroom upstairs. He is thoroughly comfortable, and this morning asked that we tell you not to worry about him. The other men will look after your needs."

"They do so very well," said Wade with a sigh.

He sat up and eyed his imprisoned hands quizzically. Then he glanced at his guard Hawkins, standing stolidly at the foot of the bed, and from him to the master-rogue. Morton was no longer the butler. He had discarded the clothes of that calling and was dressed in a well-fitting suit; in his hand were a hat and a stick, evidence that he contemplated a little stroll; he was a man of the world, easy, self-confident, and quietly strong. Wade laughed. Even now it was hard to think that he

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was not dreaming. But for the manacles he could well have believed himself once more the master of his own house, and here his servant, and there a friend. Yet those cuffs were real and he was sure now of his memory. His position was aggravating in the extreme, but it was so absurd that he could not give himself up to useless anger. Its very improbability was what had made it so easily possible. The sunlight was pouring into the room; the muffled roar of the living city sounded distant but distinct; through the gauzy curtains he could see the tall buildings with their hundreds of windows, each one offering help could he but get the eye or ear there; yet here he lay, the victim of this modern Ali Babi and the forty thieves at his back. How securely he was caught, how little hope there was of rescue, how easily the company could keep away too solicitous friends and foil his every move, Morton now made clear. Seating himself on a chair he addressed Wade with a politeness that lost for his words none of their convincing truth.

"Now that you are again alive to your situation, Captain," he said, "I wish to explain a few things that will make it more comfortable for all concerned. You realize by this time that The Advanced Robberies Company, Limited, does apply intelligence to crime. Your position is too unusual

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for your friends outside to have a suspicion of it. We could kill you, bury you in the cellar, and live a whole month in your house without the world getting any inkling of the crime. But we have no intention of doing that, so long as you behave. What the company wants is money, as the time of its next dividend is near at hand. This operation will give it to us, but at the same time it will cost you nothing. Do you understand?"

"I can't see how you are going to get money unless out of me, Morton," Wade answered.

"That is simple enough," was the calm return. "It is a matter that does not concern you at all. But by the way, Captain, I suggest that hereafter in view of my changed position in your house you address me as Dr. Arden. It is under that name that I am known to my associates, and being the director in this operation the agents here would appreciate it if I were treated with some respect by you. It is a minor matter, of course."

"Doctor Arden, then," said Wade with a sarcastic drawl.

Hawkins scowled, but his superior paid no attention to the cut in the Captain's tone. "Thank you," he said pleasantly. "Now to get to business. After we put you to bed last night, I attended a meeting of the directors of our company, and I need hardly tell you that they were delighted with

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the progress of the work here. The board voted to pay your man Harris five dollars per day as compensation for the inconvenience he will suffer by a month's confinement in the trunkroom. The valet has been informed and expresses himself as more than satisfied. He says he will stay longer in prison if we require it. But as concerns you, Captain, I have been ordered to express to you the regret of the board that it is necessary to use you thus, but the company must live, and can allow no feelings of sentiment to interfere with its work. The directors, however, wish me to make your imprisonment as little irksome as possible, and instructed me to do everything in my power to make you comfortable, even to the extent of letting you enjoy yourself. So you see that it rests entirely with you whether or not our month here will be a source of misery or pleasure."

"Thank you, Doctor," said Wade mockingly. "Express to your board my gratitude and also my opinion that they are a lot of blackguards, if there is a board. I suspect that your company is a pretty fiction and when we get down to facts it will be found that you, Hawkins, and Albert are corporation, directors, officers, and agents."

"Indeed!" said Dr. Arden. "You suspect so, eh?" Thereupon he arose and cried, "David!"

"Yes, sir," came a voice from the bathroom.

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"Are you getting the Captain's tub ready?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! Albert!"

The second man appeared from the direction of the library, and stood awaiting orders attentively.

"Who is attending the door?" asked the Doctor.

"Francis, sir," Albert answered.

"Then relieve him. Tell him to notify Andre that the Captain will have breakfast soon, and that he will serve it in the library,"

"Very good, sir." Albert marched away.

Wade was amazed, but Dr. Arden affected not to notice him. He took a handsome silver case from his pocket, and selecting a small cigar, lighted it, and began smoking.

"You see, Captain, that you are completely in our power," he said. "It is for this very reason that we wish to be as lenient with you as you will allow. You are, I presume, a man of honor."

"You presume?" cried Wade angrily.

"I mean," returned Dr. Arden, "that to you a lie is a lie, whether told to a customs inspector on a steamship pier, in a note declining an invitation, or to the thief whose hands are at your throat. Some persons who would die rather than lie in their club will perjure themselves without blushing in a customs declaration. The man who perjured himself like a gentleman ceased to be a gen-

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tleman when he placed himself in a net that could be escaped only by lying, and he would have been more of a gentleman had he shot himself before he committed perjury. Though I am a thief, Captain, I cherish an ideal of honor. To me the gentleman is the noblest work of God, and the rarest. Blessed as you have been with splendid opportunities, you have, I hope, tried to be one?"

"Tried to be," said Wade laughing. "Indeed, until I heard this little dissertation from a criminal I had considered myself one, but now I am in doubt."

"Perhaps I am an idealist," returned the Doctor quietly. "You remember those grand lines of the poet Keats:

Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

I wonder whether the time will come when men will appreciate the inspired nature of those few words and will burn them deep into their souls, obliterating forever that shifty device, Honesty is the best policy. That word 'policy' has wreaked much harm to our race. Better that it had never been born, innocent though it was in its beginning. Have you ever traced its history to the Greek, *polis*, and thought how degraded——"

"My dear Doctor, Greek roots are very interest-

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ing, but will not make me a filling breakfast," Wade interrupted petulantly.

"Pardon me," said the Doctor. "I forgot that you had not had a bite to eat since last night. I happened to get on one of my hobbies and in such cases I am apt to ride far and wide unless some one stops me. We will go back then to the matter of honor. You tell me you have tried to be a gentleman and a man of honor. Perhaps you may remember the words of Lord Bacon: 'There is no vice which doth so cover a man with shame as to be found false and perfidious.' How true——"

Wade began to laugh.

"You do not hold such a view then?" cried the other. "I am sorry."

"Not at all," returned Wade. "I quite agree with both you and Lord Bacon, but my sense of the ridiculous was struck by the sight of a thief lecturing me about truth and honor."

The Doctor laughed good-naturedly.

"Of course it does seem absurd," he returned. "But after all not more than most sermons, and what is said is not one whit the less true or false because of him who says it. I was trying to get your views that I might learn how far we should be justified in trusting your word if we allowed you to move unhampered about your rooms."

DR. ARDEN CARRIES HIS POINT

"If I gave you my word and broke it to obtain my freedom and bring you and your crew to justice, no man would blame, nor would my own conscience condemn me," said Wade hotly.

"The men you know perhaps would not," said Dr. Arden with a slight sneer. "As for your conscience, it is probably an entirely modern organ and has to be worked by a steam-engine before it utters a sound. You, perhaps, would swallow the stock exchange and strain at a faro box. I am disappointed in you, Captain, deeply disappointed. Though myself a thief, I am also a philosopher, and I cherish ideals which I would have other men live up to. I even live up to them myself at times when I can do so without danger. But in you, sir, a man who apparently has nothing in this world to be dishonest for, I had expected to find a gentleman; I had hoped that on your word we could remove all restraint and allow you to have the free run of this house during that time when the company was carrying on its operations here. You have disillusioned me. Believing that our dealings could be conducted with honor as it is among gentlemen, I find that your own standard is hardly better than that of thieves."

To express his disgust more fully Dr. Arden paced up and down the room in disdainful silence. Wade watched him, astonished. The contemptu-

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ous tone cut him deeply, and at the moment he was conscious of his inferiority to this confessed thief, who quoted Keats and Bacon, who had high ideals of honor and sneered at those of the men on whom he preyed. Whatever his crimes, the fellow had brains, and Wade as a man of the world could pay homage to ability even where morals were lacking. Arden had ability. As he appeared now, pacing to and fro, thoughtful, scornful, erect, with a light step and easy grace, he seemed indeed the fulfilment of his own ideal. The clothes in taste and cut were perfect, the face was handsome and full of intelligence, and the eyes frank and keen. He was the man whose offered hand had been refused, who grieved because one he trusted had forfeited his high opinion, who suffered righteous anger that he should be driven to take measures which he deplored. Mortifying as was his own position, Wade forgot it in his admiration for one who had so cleverly enmeshed him. Further obstinacy could only bring him more humiliation, which he had warranted by his rash confession that his word of honor could be an expedient and not an inviolable oath. He wanted to set himself right.

"Dr. Arden," he exclaimed in a tone more tractable than he had yet assumed, "I was wrong. If I gave you my word it would be contemptible of me to violate it. You could trust me."

DR. ARDEN CARRIES HIS POINT

Arden's face expressed his pleasure. "I believe we could trust you," he said quietly. "But let me make this plain to you—the safety of every man in this house will depend on your honor. If we accepted your parole and you played us false, whatever happened to us the Robberies Company would live on, and it never forgets. It is a soulless corporation."

Wade nodded. He believed at last that the Doctor was speaking the truth.

"We do not want to subject you to further discomfort and humiliation," the other went on. "We could feed you with a spoon and let you lie there for weeks were we so inclined. But we offer you something better. Give us your word that for one month you will make no effort to escape if we allow you the freedom of this floor of your house; that you will never approach any nearer than six feet to any window; that you will communicate with no one without my permission. Come, Captain, be reasonable."

"I will," said Wade. "You have my word."

"Good!" cried Dr. Arden. "We will show you that the Robberies Company is not all bad, that its members are gentlemen in their way, and that its victims can become almost its friends. Hawkins, free the Captain's hands and feet, and take the irons away. David!"

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"Yes, sir," came a respectful voice from the bathroom.

"Our guest will have his tub. Francis!"

"Coming, sir."

Wade now saw a face that was new to him. A squarely built, powerful man of about forty years entered. He had squeezed himself into Morton's discarded clothes, and was evidently acting in the capacity of butler, standing at respectful attention waiting for the orders. A quiet smile played over Dr. Arden's face as he recalled how but a few hours before he had been acting the same obsequious part, and compared with his own finished performance the clumsy appearance of his successor.

"Francis has taken my place," he explained dryly. "He is new to it, but is an honest fellow!"

The new butler bowed.

"Breakfast, sir?" he inquired laconically.

"In the library," Dr. Arden replied. "The Captain is on parole. If he forgets it, you know the company's orders."

"Yes, sir," returned the other, and he measured the man on the bed with his cold eyes.

"But I do not believe he will forget," said Arden, moving to the door. He put on his hat. "See that he has every comfort. For a while, Captain—a while only—good-by."

He waved his hand affably and disappeared.

CHAPTER VI

DAVID STANDS GUARD

IT is a reproach to our race that it should regard dining as a high form of pleasure. We boast ourselves as far above the animals; we cherish the belief in our immortality and condemn them, soulless creatures, to oblivion; we shudder at the suggestion that we are descended from the ape, yet when we wish to entertain a fellow-man we feed him. Were we to receive a formal invitation requesting the pleasure of our company at eight o'clock to a feast of reason and a flow of soul, we should probably regret on account of our previous engagements, but let us be asked to dine and we accept. Perhaps we choose wisely, for is not the food at most houses better than the reason and the wine than the soul? I ask this though myself a chronic diner-out. But I have become the victim of a habit. Dining out can be a habit. I vow that each cigar shall be my last, knowing well the waste of time and strength and money. So with dinners. We go on dining, dining, dining out with people we know and people we don't know, people we love

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and people we hate, though the home hearth with its crackling fire, the deep chair, and a favorite friend, either man or book, offer us delights far higher. Always when that moment comes when I have settled one fair woman before her plate, forks, knives, and glasses, fixed her comfortably for the feeding, I feel as a pugilist must when he hears the gong and steps into the ring, for a conversational bout is on. It must go round by round till the end comes with coffee. We spar carefully at first, that good soul and I, making feints and passes about the weather, until at last I break down her guard and find that she is interested in dogs. I discover suddenly and of necessity that I love dogs. Our two hearts beat as one on the dog question, through fish and down to roast, and hope is high that without further ravages on my brain I can last out the battle. But no. She turns from me to the man on the other side, and I hear her say sweetly, "What a warm winter we are having!" Alone, I gaze leftward, out of the corner of my eye, to see at my other hand a beautiful creature intently studying the flowers. I scratch my brain and no thought rises to the surface. I catch her glance and smile encouragingly. She is thinking hard and gives me a silent appeal. We understand each other, yet have no thought with which to open communication. She stirs uneasily and in despera-

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tion I cry out, "What a warm winter we are having!" "Indeed," she returns. So we feint and pass, sidestep and dodge, till I land a telling blow. She has read a book. How I love that book! Two hearts beat as one about that book, down through salad. Then she, too, turns from me and I am alone again, studying the débris of a roast quail. "We were speaking of dogs," I cry in desperation.

This is not reason nor soul, but we mix it with strawberries in January and wash it down with the madeira of our grandfathers and make it endurable. It is the highest form of social diversion we have been able to devise. Perhaps man looks his best when dining, talks his best when eating, seems his wisest as he sips his glass in silence. Of course I am not opposed to eating, being human, but I do regret that we have not reached that high state of civilization in which hospitality is to set before your guest the best your mind holds, not to open your larder to him. That time may come. But nowadays, I suppose, he would suffer intellectual starvation. Still, if eat we must, let us have him to breakfast. Thoreau says that most men would feel shame if caught cooking for themselves such a dinner as is every day prepared for them by others. At best it is a gross feast. Not so with breakfast. There is more poetry in breakfasting than dining. This is no sluggish meal that we ap-

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proach when jaded with much thinking, that sends us home to uneasy dreams. It comes in the prime of day, when a man, remade by sleep, steps aglow from his icy plunge to a repast truly epicurean. He luxuriates at a simple table lighted by sunshine; life's real hours are before him and nature offers her best fruits and viands to prepare him for them; he does not sate himself, but rises refreshed, keen in body and brain for what the day holds.

I think the company understood the art of living. That night when it captured Heberton Wade, it set before him a sybaritic feast, calling to its aid rich sauces, heavy meats, and wines, to quiet him and to efface in sleep the memory of his wrongs. Truly this soulless corporation applied intellect to crime. Where the brute criminal would have left the victim to starvation or coarse fare, it called him in the morning to a charming repast. It seemed as though Nature was its agent; that it controlled the earth and the goodness thereof; that it had bathed the room in sunshine, and caused the air outside to crackle with cold to make the blaze within more enticing. It worked with rare cunning. Down in the depths of the house Andre, the cook, prepared arguments that did more to reconcile the Captain to his fate than could have been presented by a dozen Ardens with their logic and muscle. From

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the tub, his blood running full and free, his body clothed luxuriously without the restraint of starched linen, Wade went into his library to find a small table close by the cheery fire, covered with a pure white cloth, unlittered with utensils of a feast, save for a spoon and a plate whereon reposed a half of a golden grapefruit, in whose hollowed heart lay a red cherry, floating in an amber pool. He sat down languidly, as one accustomed to this fruit in every form, but when he had driven the spoon into it and tasted, his eyes opened with pleasure and surprise.

"This is excellent!" he exclaimed. "Not brandy, not rum, not sherry—Francis, how is this done?"

The lowered look with which he had first regarded Wade had gone from the butler's face. Now he was the servant, awkward, but obsequious and anxious to please.

"You like it, sir?" said he smiling.

"It is the best I ever tasted," the Captain cried heartily. "I supposed that it had been dashed with sherry or something, but this fruit has a peculiarly delicious flavor. What is it?"

"If I knew, sir, I would tell you," replied the butler. "But I am only the company's agent, and that method of preparing grapefruit is one of its secrets. Andre is a master."

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"He is certainly outdoing himself now," returned Wade laughing. "He has been hiding his light under a bushel since he first came to me. I never realized what a jewel I had."

"Andre is considered the company's best cook," said Francis. "Of course, acting under orders, he has been holding himself in reserve, but he will show you some things, sir."

"Well, I certainly never had such a delicious morsel of grapefruit before," rejoined Wade, squeezing the last drop of the precious juice into his spoon. "Do you suppose he has any more?"

The face of the butler resumed its set squareness and gloom. "No," he answered. "He spent hours over that half you have just finished. You see, besides having the exactly proper blends of liquors to improve the natural flavor of the fruit, the best effect is obtained by serving it at a certain temperature. Dr. Arden, who has theories, sir, maintains that too much cold is as ruinous to food as too much heat; he says that the thermometer is not enough used in the kitchen, and he has coached Andre until he now makes it his main reliance."

Thereupon Francis picked up the plate and disappeared, leaving the wondering Wade staring at the cloth. But the company's service was on a plane with its cooking. In a minute the man was

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back and set before the Captain a single covered dish and a fork.

"What now?" inquired Wade expectantly.

He touched the cover, but it was burning hot. Francis lifted it, and discovered a solitary smelt. It was a diminutive fish, with its pristine beauty so unspoiled by the fire that it looked ready to flop from its hot bed in a mad effort to reach water. The Captain was disappointed, not so much by the uncooked appearance of the creature as by its size, for he was exceedingly hungry. He turned to his attendant petulantly.

"Is that all I am to have?" he snapped. "And coffee—how about coffee? I am dying for coffee."

"Coffee!" cried Francis. "Do you want to blunt your every faculty so early in the day with a hot internal souse? You do not know how to live. Let me suggest a half glass of water with the chill just taken off."

This was free speaking for a servant, and Wade was about to reprimand him heartily, when he remembered his strange position.

"Do you mean to tell me that your infernal company is going to deprive me of my morning coffee as well as my liberty?" he demanded.

"Not at all," Francis answered more amicably. "Our orders are to give you everything you ask in the way of food and drink. But Dr. Arden

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thought you might like to learn this morning how to breakfast properly. The Doctor, you know, has theories on breakfasts."

"He has theories on everything — confound him!" Wade exclaimed. "So have I, and one of them is that coffee is essential——"

"Pardon me," interrupted the butler most politely, "but while you talk, sir, the temperature of that smelt is rapidly falling. You shall have your coffee, but do try the fish before it is ruined."

Mollified by the promise, the Captain took one gingerly bite. He smiled.

"By jove!" he cried. "It is good! How is it done?"

"It is smelt *à la Arden*," replied Francis, evidently delighted with the reception the morsel was now meeting. "It is so named in honor of our chief, who presented the recipe to the company. Notice the simplicity of the dish. There is no sauce—nothing but plain fish, and the secret of its palatability lies in the seasoning and the proper application of heat."

"Am I the prisoner of a restaurant company or a gang of thieves?" inquired Wade, laughing heartily, as he contemplated the head and tail, all that remained of that excellent smelt.

"You should ask Dr. Arden," returned his attendant. "Ah, sir, you should hear him talk on

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the relation of cookery to crime, on the influence of fat on the human mind. I heard him say once, speaking to some of our directors, that the greater the force that gravity exerted on a man's body, just so much less did heaven draw upward on his soul—a beautiful thought, sir, and——”

“Not now, not now,” Wade broke in with a deprecating wave of his hand. “Let me hear this from the Doctor's own lips, and you bring me some coffee and something else—something filling.”

“Very good, sir,” said Francis, clearing off the table.

He left to return in a moment with a small pot of coffee and three corn cakes. Andre was certainly a master of corn cakes. Fairest offspring of the griddle these were, golden brown, and bathed in the fragrant maple syrup, they melted in the Captain's mouth deliciously. At the first sniff of the coffee he smiled, and his whole countenance was wreathed in contentment until he sought to fill his cup a second time, and turning the pot upside down got nothing.

“See here, Francis,” he said fretfully, “the company may think I am a bird, but it is mistaken. It has no right to set such coffee and corn cakes before any man and then shut off the supply.”

“More!” cried the butler in astonishment.

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"Why, Captain, we never dreamt that you would want more. You have now had ample food to supply the nourishment required by your body until you have luncheon at one o'clock. More, sir, would be a surfeit. Dr. Arden has a theory that——"

"Hang Arden's theories!" cried Wade, rising and glaring at the man. "I am accustomed to a square breakfast. You tell Andre that the next time he sends me only three corn cakes and one cup of coffee, I'll—I'll——"

He hesitated. His position was such that it was difficult for him even to threaten with any force, and he was casting about in his mind for some form in which to express an effective purpose, when Francis interrupted.

"Please don't get angry, Captain," he said apologetically. "It will not happen again. If you must stuff, you can, but I am disappointed, sir. I had thought that for a gentleman who was going to be confined to his house for a month this was an ideal breakfast. Remember, you are not going riding this morning."

Wade started.

"Go away," he cried angrily. "Leave me alone."

"Very good, sir," said Francis, surprised at the sudden violence of the prisoner. "I'll go, sir. If you want anything, ring." At the door he stopped

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and sent a parting shot: "David will be watching, sir."

There was something ominous in the butler's tone. David was the man Wade had not seen. He had only heard a voice answering Arden's call in the morning, and now that incident, the fellow's care in keeping out of sight, enfolded him in a certain mystery, which, coupled with this latest warning, seemed of ill omen to the prisoner.

"Who is David?" he asked in gentler tone.

"I'm sorry, sir, but I can't tell you," was the answer, polite but meaning. "He is watching, sir."

So Francis disappeared. The Captain looked around the room, of which he knew every crack and cranny, and saw no place that could conceal the mysterious guard. He pushed aside the *portière* and glanced into the inner room to find it empty. With a laugh at himself for the feeling of dread that had inspired this cautious search, he turned back to his chair by the fire, and throwing himself into it, began smoking.

He was not to ride! It was the recalling of this prohibition that brought on Francis the anger of the prisoner, for in the hours that had been so crowded with unusual incident he had forgotten that at ten he should be standing by his horse at the park entrance waiting for Georgianna. He

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had forgotten Georgianna! For an instant only, he said, in excuse for this neglect, then he glanced at the clock. Never had he known time to fly so. Just a few hours ago, it seemed, he had been a free man, with nothing before him but a dull round of social adventures. How different now! Life had a new interest. His quiet old house had become as romantic as a mediæval castle. He, the prosaic bachelor, was caught in a web of crime. Sitting here calmly smoking, watching the fire from his own chair, he was a fly, tangled in threads mysteriously woven. He was as helpless, too, as the tiny insect in its gauzy prison, but far from so despairing, as he believed that he was not to be devoured. His spider seemed almost benevolent in its purpose, and fascinated him by the cleverness with which it spun the strong filaments that held him. The mystery of his enmeshing and its purpose presented a riddle that amused him, and though he must sit passive amid the broil he was keen to see what the days were to unfold before him. He could enjoy himself thoroughly even, but for Georgianna. He told himself the truth at that minute. His thoughts had turned to matrimony for want of something better to give life interest, and his proposal to the girl was to be the beginning of an adventure. The game he had set out to play was to win her, to make her love him, to make himself love

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her. Fair though she was, clever, bewitching, his head was in that game and not his heart. But the company had him in its spell. What heart he had was in the contest with this strange band of men who certainly had intellect and boasted that they were revolutionizing crime. Who were they, why did they work, how, and to what ends? he had asked himself again and again, and now he wanted to go on with them until he learned the answer. Arden, the perfect servant, the philosopher, the epicure, the polished man of the world, interested him as no other had. Here was a fascinating enigma—this soulless being in whom ran the blood so full and red, this idealist without morals, this dreamer of right and doer of wrong. He would know him better, would know the motives that impelled him, for something told Wade that this savant who so esteemed in others the quality of honor had not sold his own for some mere trifle.

At the thought of Georgianna alone was Wade unhappy. He had not changed his mind, but he did wish he had not hurried so in his wooing. He wanted her to-day as much as ever. As he sat there smoking, he seemed to see in fancy the girl of many moods, now dashing with him along the wooded lane, over hill and valley, thoughtless, careless, merry, now the serious soul pondering the problems one would have thought farthest from her

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heart. The picture of her was clear to him then—too clear, I fear, to augur well for his wooing. He could have told you the color of her hair, her eyes, her cheeks, and whether the nose was straight, aquiline, or pug, or was her brow high or low. I could not. Nor could I have told you of the lights that play among the leaves on a summer day more than that they delight my eye, nor of the breeze that stirs them than that it was to my ears the sweetest music. I know not why. If insane men are possessed of devils, then those in love must be possessed of fools, that are only driven out by matrimony, to rush down the steep places and drown themselves in the sea of reality. Heberton Wade had in him this elemental fool, but he was still the master of his own head, as much this day as yesterday when he had proposed to Georgianna in a fashion strangely sane, yet unwise. His chief thought now was regret for the haste that had so greatly complicated his situation. Had he not hurried so he could have gone through this adventure with the company unworried and turned from it to prosecute his cause with her. But suppose she came to the park and found him missing, what would she think? Could she forgive him? A month must pass before he could explain and set himself right in her eyes, and he had known more than one girl to announce her engagement, fall in love,

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and marry in that time. He liked Georgianna, he wanted her, though he was not mad about her, and perhaps his perfect sanity made him still more annoyed that he should seem to her a fickle, unsteady creature rather than the stolid man who found his purpose and pursued it. In some way she must be warned not to doubt the sincerity of his intentions, and to suspend judgment till he could appear in his own defence. Arden was fair; he could read the note and see that it held no secret; there was still time.

Wade rang the bell violently.

"I want the Doctor at once!" he cried to Albert, as the second man appeared.

"He is taking his morning walk, sir," said Albert. "Is there anything I can do?"

"I must send a note."

This imperative need had no effect on the other.

"I am sorry, sir," he said, "but the directors' orders are implicit to let you communicate with no one."

"But I must!" exclaimed Wade angrily.

"But you can't!" said Albert emphatically.

"It is harmless," returned the Captain. "I had an engagement to ride in the park with a young lady this morning. She will be at the Plaza in a half-hour—I mean she may be—and it would seem confoundedly rude if I were not there."

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Albert's voice was more sympathetic.

"It's too bad," he said. "I see, Captain, that it is unpleasant. I wish Dr. Arden were here, for if he knew the circumstances without doubt he would telephone to her house that you were ill. He did countermand the order for your horse, but, of course, he did not know about the other."

"Can't you telephone—say Captain Wade is ill in bed?" asked the prisoner more hopefully.

"It would cost me my place," said Albert firmly. "You must remember the mere convenience or inconvenience of its victims is as nothing to the purpose of the company. If we were to be bothered continually about your engagements it would be easier to knock you on the head."

This calm statement of his own subjection, coming from one who wore his livery, exasperated Wade past all speaking; he sat down abruptly and for a moment let his anger burn through his cigar. The smoke of it arose in heavy clouds, and as he puffed he became calm again. He knew that force could avail nothing against these men, but with diplomacy he might do something. He could not explain to Georgianna—all hope of that was gone. But would she go to meet him at the park? If she did not, then matters were simple enough and there was no more need to worry; if she did—Wade shuddered to think of it.

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"Albert," he said pleadingly, "it would be a great favor to me if I could find out if the young lady does go to the Plaza to ride with me. You see, if by any good luck she does not it will relieve my mind. Couldn't one of the men run uptown and watch?"

"There is not time," returned Albert. "Besides we do not know her."

"She rides a roan horse," said Wade. "You could not miss it. It would be led over from the club by a groom, just a few minutes before ten. She would drive up in a brougham—a beautiful girl, and if nothing else identified her you can rest assured she would wait around a minute for me and then drive home in a rage."

Albert began to show interest. "Is she light or dark?" he asked.

"Auburn hair," Wade answered. "Beautiful auburn hair."

"I suppose you mean red, sir," said Albert.

"You might call it that. She has a very rich complexion, and is of medium height, slender, and when she laughs—but I guess she won't laugh. Will you go for me, Albert?"

"I cannot," said the man. "My orders are to stay here, but I think I can help you. A friend of mine is a valet to a gentleman at the Hotel Neth-

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erland. Maybe if I telephone him he will run across the street and watch for us."

"Good!" cried Wade. "The very thing! That will give us time. Here, have a smoke." He held the box toward the servant, who took a cigar and lighted it. "Hurry, now," the Captain added. "Tell your friend to 'phone back as soon as he finds out—tell him there is ten dollars in it for him. Tell him——"

Albert had gone.

Would Georgianna appear? A conflict of desires was now waging in the brain of Heberton Wade as he sat watching the clock. He knew that for his cause it were best that she did not go, to find him a deserter, to think herself rudely jilted and abandoned without reason. Yet he was a man, with all man's vanity, and it would please him mightily to know that in this girl's heart he had lighted the spark which he had but to fan to awaken into a glowing flame. The difficulty would be to fan it. He began to walk up and down the room, smoking violently, now moody, now grimly laughing at his strange predicament. The clock marked ten, the fateful time. An hour more, it seemed, till the quarter was paced off by the slow moving hand and Albert's footfalls sounded in the hall outside.

"Was she there?" cried Wade eagerly, running to meet the messenger.

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"Yes, sir," the man answered.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, sir. My friend was late, but he got over in time to see one of the club grooms holding a roan and a red-haired——"

"Auburn, please," interrupted the Captain.

"An auburn-haired young lady, very pretty, mounted and rode off."

"Alone?" cried Wade.

"I think so, sir."

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed the Captain.

So she had come to meet him half-way! He had lighted the spark and was not there to fan it. Poor Georgianna! What would she think of him now? By her simple coming she had set ablaze the cold heart of Heberton Wade. This was no longer an affair of the head, he said; he loved the girl because she cared for him, if only just a little. He had wounded her, and a higher honor than bound him to thieves called him to break from his bondage and go to her. Go, he would! His mind worked quickly now.

"That is all," he said to Albert carelessly, picking a book from the table and dissembling deep interest in its pages.

The man left. Only David was watching the prisoner.

"David!" Wade called.

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He got no answer.

"David!" he cried, stepping into the next room.

The silence was uncanny.

Vainly the Captain peered into every nook on the whole floor to find no living thing there. Still he was not half satisfied, the company was so cunning in its workings. Alone though he was, unwatched though he believed himself, he dressed for the street in a careless fashion to give the impression that he was merely passing time.

"David!" he called again.

Unanswered, he lounged into the library, more convinced than ever that this David was a mere bogie, but none the less careful to keep up his appearance of compliance. Reaching the desk he opened the drawer and snatched his pistol. Cocking it, he turned quickly. A hat was at hand and he put it on his head; then he started to move to the door, his mind made up that he would leave the house.

Footsteps sounded on the stairs and he paused.

"David, come here," he called.

The deep, calm voice of Arden answered him.

"David is out just now," the Doctor said, as he stepped into the library and looked down the barrel of a revolver into the eye of his prisoner.

Heberton Wade had never shot a man in his life. He had never before even faced another with a

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deadly weapon. To shoot down a robber in the heat of a struggle is one thing; to fire on a quiet gentleman, who has come jauntily into your room, fresh from a brisk walk, is another, and far different. He was no coward. He was not agitated, but looked steadily at the Doctor one moment, while he considered the next step.

"Hold up your hands, please," he said politely, to rob the scene of all melodrama.

The smile passed from Arden's face, but he made no motion to obey.

"What silly dime-novel play is this?" he asked in a tone of gentle chiding.

"Stand aside!" cried Wade, now forgetting his suavity. "Don't try to block my way or I will fire!"

"I don't think you will, Captain," returned the Doctor quietly. "If you did I should be most disappointed in you, for I trust your word."

He moved toward the other a few steps; then turned to the table and taking a cigar from the box there, lighted it, puffing it into full blaze, as though this alone in all the world concerned him.

With a quick movement forward Wade tossed the pistol on the table.

"I ask your pardon," he cried.

Dr. Arden picked up the weapon and carefully let the hammer down to the safety notch. "Don't

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throw a cocked revolver around so carelessly," he said with a grave smile. "It might go off and hurt one of us."

The prisoner dropped into a chair wearily. "You beat me at every point," he exclaimed. "It is hard to have a pack of——"

"Let us put this away first," interposed the Doctor pleasantly, stepping to the desk and tossing the revolver carelessly into the drawer. "The company does not wish to disturb your house more than is necessary. You were saying——"

"I was saying that it is hard to have a pack of thieves bind you hand and foot with nothing but airy words."

"But, Captain, David was watching you."

"David—David!" cried Wade. "When will I hear the last of that scoundrel?"

"Never!" Arden answered. "He is one of the company's most trusted agents—your conscience, Captain."

CHAPTER VII

LADY VICTORIA GLYME

GEORGIANNA COWLES went by. From a window of the Wanderers, from the gloom of the lounging-room and the hiding of its curtains, I watched her as she stepped briskly along the avenue that clear, cold morning. Against the blustering wind that swept the corner she had raised her muff, so I could not see her face, but I knew her. Upon my word, I believe that had Georgianna gone by the club that day, even had I not seen her, I should have been conscious of it, for I loved her. I had just discovered that, and my perceptions then of anything concerning her were unusually acute. Perhaps it is an exaggeration, this claim of second sight, but it is hard to know that anything so vulgar as a brick wall can hide from you one whose image is ever in your eye, whose name lingers always on your tongue. I had lost my godniece. The girl had become a woman. The man had opened his eyes. The romp was over. Boon companions they had been on many a wild, careless gallop, but now he wanted her to go with

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him down the long, long way, through its shadow and its sunshine, not the way of life alone, but through eternity. So we always fancy it, until we marry again and then we have our doubts about the other side of the brink. I had no doubts now. In all time past, in time present, and in all the future, there never had been, was not, and never would be a woman for me but this one. That belief was made stronger by the fear that I was to lose her. This fear, it was, that discovered to me her transcending importance in my life, and the more I pondered over my case, the deeper became the conviction and with it my despondency. Blind I had been when the opportunity was mine, and now that I opened my eyes it was to see her going from me. I might call, but would she turn again? I might pursue, but would she not run the harder? You see, I had a profound respect for Heberton Wade.

Georgianna went by. There was something ominous in her thus flashing past me when with brooding over her I had almost paralyzed my brain. Had she looked up, had our glances met, I should have rushed from the club in chase, but she stepped carelessly along, her head turned into the wind, her muff raised, with no thought apparently except to keep her nose warm, and I sat numb and leaden-hearted, watching. She was lost in the

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crowd, and I sank deeper into my chair, a disconsolate heap, and smoked very hard.

Billy Knowlton entered and dropped into a seat across the window from mine, which made me scowl viciously, for it did seem that in all that vast, gloomy room it was absurd that two men should huddle so together. I wanted to be alone. I wanted to enjoy my unhappiness in peace, and to let my brain run riot while hope battled with despair and sense with sentiment. Then I never had liked Knowlton anyway. He was an obtrusive optimist. His relatives kept on dying and leaving him money, and he could not understand how you could be depressed by a mere lack of funds. Money was not all of life, he said; he could part with every cent he had without a sigh, provided that active brain of his were only left intact. Between the two I should have preferred his wealth. Yet he had some brains. A man may not be as foolish as he laughs. Knowlton always laughed and he laughed loudest when you were most depressed. He slapped you on the back and told you to cheer up when you did not want to, and under no circumstances would do it, if you could. He laughed at me now as he threw himself into his chair and prepared to enjoy his morning paper and cigar.

"Why, Jim, what is the matter?" he exclaimed. "You look as if you had lost your last friend."

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"Can't I be unhappy in peace?" I growled.

But you cannot blast Knowlton's good humor.

"I am sorry to see you that way," he returned.

"This is a day to put life into a man. You should be thankful that you are alive. The air is full of snap and sunshine, and you have nothing in the world to do but enjoy it. Get out of this mouldy place—out into the bracing wind and don't sit moping here over stocks—or is it a woman?"

I just blew smoke at him.

He shrugged his shoulders and lifted his paper between us. There was silence for some minutes and then suddenly my attention was drawn by his cry of surprise from the thread I was picking from the curtain.

"By Jove! Heberton Wade is engaged."

My expression as I straightened up in my chair and looked at him was more of casual interest than astonishment. This was news to me, of course, but its effect was lost, as I had collapsed before the blow struck, and that I troubled to give attention now was that Knowlton might not suspect the cause of my melancholy.

"Evidently you have heard about it before," he said, eying me.

"Of course," I snapped. "Didn't I introduce them to each other? I made the match."

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A sigh escaped me, and I sank back into my old disconsolate heap, and gazed across the street at a chimney.

"I thought Wade was a confirmed bachelor," said Knowlton, "and it is a kind of a surprise to read about him being the hero of a romance like this."

"Romance?" I sneered. "Wade has no more romance in him than a fish. He is marrying for looks, and if she had refused him he would have proposed to the next pretty girl he met. He made up his mind that he should have an attractive wife, and he set out in cold blood to pick one." My anger was getting the better of my discretion, and I stopped suddenly. "It is a good thing for them both," I added, with forced pleasure in my tone.

"Have you known her long?" Knowlton inquired.

"Since she was a child," I answered.

My companion looked at me with a puzzled expression. "Perhaps you would like to see this?" he said, holding the paper toward me.

"No," I replied, waving it away impatiently. "I know all about it."

"But I never knew you had spent much time abroad," said Knowlton apologetically.

"What has that to do with it?" I growled.

"I thought you knew her."

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"Of course I do," I cried. "Their place is right next my little box in the country."

"In Hampshire?" questioning politely, yet evidently doubting.

"On Long Island," said I, quietly but firmly, as though I was showing great forbearance in not throwing something at him.

"Has the Earl of Garchester a place on Long Island?" inquired Knowlton, now assuming a tone of chiding.

Evidently there was a misunderstanding somewhere, and I thought it best to avoid further argument, so I reached out and took the proffered paper. Turning the page I was faced by this astounding headline:

TO MARRY TITLE

CAPTAIN WADE ENGAGED TO LADY
VICTORIA GLYME

FIANCÉE EARL'S DAUGHTER

WEDDING NEXT MONTH AT GARCHESTER TOWERS,
HAMPSHIRE, ENGLAND

I sprang to my feet and waved the *Standard* above my head.

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"Good for Hebbly Wade!" I cried. "That is the best news I have had in my life."

"I thought you knew all about it!" exclaimed Knowlton.

"It is a different girl," I explained. "You see——"

He wanted no explanation. He saw right through me and leaned back and laughed for several minutes, but I did not care. At a time like that I could forgive even him, boisterous fellow though he was, so I sat down smiling and turned to the greatest news of the day.

"Have you read it, Billy?" I asked.

"You interrupted me," he answered.

"Then here goes," I returned cheerfully, proceeding at once to the reading of the extraordinary story:

"An engagement of wide interest has just been announced here and in London. It is that of Captain Heberton Wade, of New York, to Lady Victoria Glyme, daughter of the fifth Earl of Garchester, and sister of the present holder of the title and estates. The Captain is one of the most widely known men in society, and besides being a member of the Gotham, the Wanderers, and many other clubs, is a famous amateur sportsman. He is thirty-eight years of age, and while not enormously wealthy, he inherited a considerable estate from his

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father, John Wade, who in his time was a prominent figure in Wall Street. While engaged in no business Captain Wade is a man of wide interests, and his name is seen occasionally among the contributors to the more serious magazines. His future bride is one of the most beautiful women in England, and is an intimate friend of the Queen.

“An interesting story is told of Captain Wade’s first meeting with Lady Victoria. It occurred on a train from Marseilles to Paris last fall, when he happened to take a place beside her in the dining-car. She had a slight difference with the waiter, and the fellow became very violent. Not understanding the language, the gallant American seized the man by the collar and proceeded to chastise him. Several comrades rushed to the waiter’s aid, and a general *mêlée* followed which was stopped with difficulty. Resulting explanations showed that the waiter’s seeming violence to the beautiful English woman was only a French apology, and the Captain restored good feeling by a liberal shower of coin. The incident allowed him to open conversation with his fair fellow-traveller, and this conversation, it now seems, ripened into love. He followed her to England, and his return here alone in November gave rise to rumors in court circles that he had been refused. All’s well that

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ends well. The announcement of his engagement was made yesterday from his house.

“Captain Wade will sail for England in a few days to claim his bride. The wedding will take place early in January at Garchester Towers, the ancient seat of the noble family in Hampshire. The groom will be attended by Mr. James Rollins, of this city, as best man, and it is certain that a number of smart New Yorkers will go over for the wedding.”

There was more, but I hurried over it. Wade's history was repeated in greater detail, attention being called to his services in the Spanish-American War, and comment was made on his refusal of the diplomatic post at St. Petersburg. Then Lady Victoria was taken up as much *in extenso* as the limited information of the *Standard* would permit. The Garchester record was reprinted verbatim from Burke's Peerage, and attention was called to the fact that her ladyship's age was there given as fifty-seven, which the writer concluded was an obvious typographical error for twenty-seven, that figure being certainly more in keeping with the photograph which adorned the page, side by side, with that of my friend. Garchester Towers was described fully, as was Kilkuddy Castle, the family seat in Ireland, for the Earl was also Baron Kilkuddy. In conclusion, there was a half-

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column résumé of the Anglo-American marriages of a century in which titles played a part, and comment was made on the special interest aroused by this latest match, because a simple American gentleman had won one of the proudest and most beautiful women of the aristocracy of Europe.

I have said that I hurried over this. My astonishment was great at finding that I was to be best man when as yet I had had no word from Wade himself as to his engagement even, and I wanted to lose no time in communicating with him. The first elation at my own good fortune was succeeded by anger for the method by which it had been accomplished. He had treated me shabbily enough, but it was the thought of Georgianna that aroused my indignation. He had deliberately deceived me. That was of little moment. The girl, though, was entitled to consideration, and surely it was not consideration to sit one day, as I had seen him, gazing at her as though he would swallow her, and then the next announce his engagement to an unknown. That I had never heard him speak of Lady Victoria was not strange. He spent much of his time abroad and had a large acquaintance in her set, but when persons on this side of the sea talk of their titled friends we are apt to suspect that they are boasting. The Captain, above all, was modest. Moreover, had he paid court to such a woman it

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was probable that he would be more reticent than ever concerning her, particularly if she had refused him and sent him home. In this first rejection lay the explanation of his sudden devotion to Georgianna. She was to be his consolation. Still angrier I became with that thought. To me it was absurd that Georgianna should be second to any one, particularly to this English beauty, this girl with a narrow face, high cheek bones, and a long jaw, who stared at me from the page. I felt now indignation at his desertion, contempt for his fickleness, wonder at his choice. Perhaps he had foreseen this and feared to face me, feared that I should upbraid him, feared the lashings of a tongue that at times can be sharp, and so chose this way of informing me of the impending wedding in which I, his best friend, had to play a part. It was clear now. He knew that with me anger burns away very quickly, and the man nearest when it rises is the one who suffers its force; I should read the news, blaze up, become calm, and go to him with meek congratulations. In fact, I had started to make the room unpleasant for Billy Knowlton when that idea came, and I checked myself. Now was the time to speak to Wade, now, before my anger had cooled and while my tongue prickled with invective. I threw down the paper and hurried to the telephone.

The voice that answered sounded like Morton's.

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"Who is this?" I asked.

"Who is talking, please?" was the answer.

"It is Mr. Rollins. I wish to speak to Mr. Wade at once."

"Ah, Mr. Rollins, this is Morton," came in deferential tones. "I am sorry to tell you, sir, that the Captain has just been operated on for appendicitis."

"Impossible!" I cried. "He was perfectly well when I left him night before last."

"I know, sir," said Morton in melancholy voice, "but almost immediately afterward he was taken down with severe pains. He sent at once for his old friend, Dr. Arden of Baltimore, who happened to be in town, and after a consultation yesterday the operation was decided on. It is just over this minute."

"Too bad, too bad!" I returned. My anger was gone. In its place there was only sympathy for this good friend stricken down thus in the moment of his greatest happiness. "How is the Captain now?"

"He is doing very well, indeed," the butler answered hopefully. "Dr. Arden says that so far the operation has been entirely successful, and the patient has such a splendid constitution that he should have no difficulty in recovering from the shock. He will be in bed some weeks though, and

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the doctor and his assistant have settled in the house to stay. They will take no chances."

"I shall come down at once, Morton, and see what I can do," I cried.

"Please do not, sir," Morton returned. "We must have absolute quiet, and at best the Captain will not be able to see his friends for two weeks. It is very hard, sir, particularly at this time. He was most wild when he heard the decision for an operation."

"I do not wonder," said I. "You refer, of course, to his engagement."

"Yes, sir," said Morton. "You see that happened yesterday when a cable came in reply to one he had sent late the afternoon before. He was very delighted when he got it, and almost lost his head for a time. He was going to send for you at once, and I think he would have sailed on the steamer this morning only the doctor interfered. He had a second severe attack, and Dr. Arden declared that to delay operating would mean death. Meantime I had notified the *Standard* about the engagement, and the reporters from the afternoon papers have been giving me no peace all day. We have had to muffle the door bell and——"

"Is there nothing that I can do?" I interrupted.

"Not now, sir, thank you," was the answer. "The Captain will want to see you just as soon as

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he is able, but Dr. Arden is very particular. All the wedding plans have been changed. We cabled the news this morning to Lady Victoria, asking her to sail at once for this side, and it is likely that we shall have a quiet wedding at the house here when she arrives. The Captain depends on you, sir. His last words before the operation were a message."

"A message?" I asked.

"Yes, sir," the butler answered. "He called me to him and said: 'Morton, tell Mr. Rollins I depend on him,' he said."

That Wade's final word at such a time should be for me was particularly flattering, and the last vestige of my anger was gone. I saw now that while the engagement was not explained, the method of its announcement was unavoidable.

"Are you sure that I can do nothing?" I asked in great solicitude of that admirable servant.

"Nothing, Mr. Rollins," Morton answered. "The house is a perfect hospital now with Dr. Arden and his assistant and the nurses. What we want is to keep people away." He hesitated as if to close the conversation, then added by sudden thought: "There is one thing you might do. If you would just notify the papers about the change in the plans for the wedding, it would be a great favor. We don't want those reporters coming to the house, and it would sound better anyway

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if you gave it out. Ceremony here, Mr. Rollins, as soon as Lady Victoria arrives, and only a few intimate friends will be asked."

"Very well, Morton, I shall attend to it," I answered. "Indeed, you might refer all reporters to me if you would just keep me posted. You can get me here at the club every morning."

"Thank you, sir."

I hung up the receiver.

"That certainly is a gem of a servant," I said to myself. "I wish I had his mate."

Knowlton was still in his chair, and was much astonished at the news of Wade's illness. He, too, had seen him but a few days before, apparently in the best of health.

"But in the hands of a competent surgeon appendicitis is a minor operation nowadays," he said hopefully.

"True," I returned. "There really is but one cloud on my horizon now. Lady Victoria will hardly look for anything less than a five-thousand-dollar present from the best man."

"Hardly," said Knowlton. "In these times there is nothing so expensive as a friend."

CHAPTER VIII

THE THEORY OF THE COMPANY

IN the wide chairs that the fire almost caressed Arden sat smoking with Heberton Wade. It was late afternoon, and the library was deep in the shadow, which was all the pleasanter, for the flames were doubly bright and the quiet hour was suited to their reflective mood. From the street sounded for a moment the call of a boy hawking the evening papers, and on hearing it the handsome face of the Doctor broke into a smile. He recovered his gravity quickly, but not before Wade's eye had caught the change of expression. The Captain had no suspicion of its cause; he did not know that the town was reading of his romance, and that at that moment his friends believed him the prisoner of the surgeon. It aroused his curiosity, though, and leaning forward he studied closely the thief, the arch-rogué with whom he was sitting in a relation so strangely amicable, as though they were host and guest.

"I should like to know what made you smile that way," he said, with perfect good humor.

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"Life always makes me smile," Arden answered gravely. "Had it not so affected me I might now be a great and honored man instead of what I am——"

"But what are you?" demanded his companion, in a tone of perplexity.

The question was ignored.

"There is nothing so fatal to success as a sense of humor," Arden went on. "I agree with Rousseau's theory that mankind would be happier in a state of nature than it is to-day. The sense of humor is of comparatively late development in us. It came with clothes and a sense of decency, with property and avarice, with knowledge and doubt, all of which have complicated our lives and made us question their value. Had I not a sense of humor I don't think I should be any happier, but I might have been judged by the world a success. I might have gone into finance, become a great banker, accumulated a fortune, and died; I might have been a lawyer, arisen to fame and made noble speeches about the dignity of a profession which depends for its existence on other people's sins; I might have been a statesman of honor and integrity, lifted into power by political parties unspeakably corrupt. But it seemed absurd. Be honest, I said to myself, and I am what I am."

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"A thief," said Wade in a voice gently cutting.

"If you choose to call me such, yes," Arden answered unruffled. "We use the term thief as a reproach, indicating one who takes something that does not belong to him, whether it has any value or not. Such a use arises from the pure ignorance of man, for after all what does by right belong to you or to me except our life and our honor? The word thief is one of barefaced expediency. We——"

"But, Doctor, before you accuse yourself of robbery," interrupted the Captain, "you must remember that you have stolen nothing from me at any rate. That is why I am so greatly puzzled. You prate a great deal about robbery, but as yet you have committed only trespass and assault. I am mystified. I appeal to you again to make clear to me what you and your infernal company are driving at."

Dr. Arden studied the fire in silence. His companion persisted.

"I am completely in your power now," he said, "and in this one instance can do nothing to frustrate you."

Arden nodded. "True. It can do no harm to enlighten you a little. Indeed, in the end you might care to educate yourself and join us."

At that suggestion Wade made a gesture of dep-

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recation, which his companion answered with a laugh.

"I am not sure at all that you are worthy of a place with us," he said. "In fact, Captain, to understand our purpose, you must comprehend the philosophy of crime; you must be versed in history; you must have studied theology and traced religion from its inception in the savage breast to its present-day strength and weakness; you must have some knowledge of political economy—to sum it all up, you must be a man of the world."

"I have always been considered such," said Wade, irritated by the implication of his ignorance.

"Of the world—nonsense, Captain," laughed Arden. "You are a man of the world's surface. You are no better than the sailor before the mast who has looked at all countries and all peoples through his grog-dulled eyes. Why, sir, you have not broken the sod of life. Pardon my free speaking, but I become indignant when I see the complacent way that men of your class—the class to which I was myself born—view their own ignorance. Just a few days ago I heard you in this very room arguing with that cynical friend of yours, James Rollins, that life was not worth living. The chances are that you will die before you have lived at all. No wonder you are bored, as you term it. Boredom comes from a stagnant brain."

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"But, Doctor, I lead a rather active life."

"So does a sheep," was the quick return. "Having your car take you through space at a fifty-mile clip is not activity, nor is chasing a polo ball over a flat field, nor riding across country at the heels of a tiny fox. These are insipid sports. I admit that I enjoy them myself at times, just as I do a bit of candy. When I follow them it is to keep my body in such trim that my brain can get real pleasure out of life. I play the great game for the joy of it. You, a man born with every opportunity to have the keenest sport in the world, content yourself with pursuits more worthy of idiots and babes. It is for this very reason that the Robberies Company finds its work so easy, its victims so many, and its profits so large."

"You leave me more puzzled than ever," said Wade.

"The company, Captain, is managed by those who are as capable as you are in what you deem the accomplishments of a man of the world. Our vice-president is one of the best polo players in England, but he goes refreshed from the field to his telescope to study the heavens and their countless mysteries. There is his real pleasure, there and delving into the minds of men, as well into the brain of the London cabby as into that of the member of the ministry. But you quit with your polo.

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And I take this man as an example. All our directors are of his order, as many-sided. In your well-groomed way you are as much of a freak as the long-haired poet or musician in his—just as one-sided. Only such as know life and men are admitted to the councils of our company. Take, for instance, the rector of a large church on the Pacific slope, a most religious man. He saved me from a tiger's claws in the Indian jungle years ago, and for a strong hand and steady nerve has no equal, yet he can write a sonnet of the highest merit. There is in this house an agent of ours who is one of the most accomplished students of Oriental languages and literature in the world, but he is no spectacled pedant. He could outwrestle and out-box you with ease and——”

“That infernal Hawkins, I am sure,” Wade exclaimed. “I felt his arms around my body to my sorrow. Nevertheless, Doctor, in spite of the virtues of your colleagues, there is a strange inconsistency about them. You tell me that your company's purpose is to make large profits out of crime.”

“Precisely.”

“And you have how many directors and agents?”

“I must decline to give you any such particulars,” replied Dr. Arden politely. “As to our pur-

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pose and our philosophy, I am willing to speak freely if you can comprehend. I think I have explained to you enough of the character of those engaged in the work."

"And I am sure I have seen enough of their methods of work to appreciate their character," said the Captain grimly. "But I confess that I am deeply puzzled by the enigma. Yesterday you preached to me about honor and truth. You spoke to me with such force that in a moment of enthusiasm for the eternal principles of right I gave my word to you, and when I was about to relent and break it and obtain my freedom, your mere contemptuous sneer disarmed me. Yet you calmly tell me that you are a man without morals; close after this comes the astounding fact that your colleagues in crime are not only gentlemen to the world's eye, but students, men of learning, mighty hunters, and accomplished sportsmen, one even being a clergyman. Had I not already had proof of your own many sides I should be inclined to doubt, but knowing you I accept what you say as a fact. Still, Doctor, I cannot understand your polo-playing astronomer, your surpliced Nimrod and sonneteer. These are men of mental and physical perfection, you say. How, then, do they descend to crime? You scold me with being bored with life, and point me to these paragons who play the

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game of common thieves and find pleasure and profit in it."

"All of which leads back to my original statement," returned Arden. "I said, you remember, that to understand the company, you must have studied theology, psychology, political economy—in a nutshell you must have traced the whole history of human thought from the earliest periods to the present day. The Robberies Company is the natural outcome of existing conditions of life. Do not for an instant suppose that any relation exists between it and those men whose actions have of late been the scandal of the financial world. They, violating the high trust imposed in them, violating the laws of the state and every principle of what you call common honesty are but vulgar thieves, and would not be employed as agents by the corporation of which I have the honor to be a director. Aside from the fact that they are not worthy of confidence, they have not the intellect required, and could be treated only with contempt."

"You astonish me," cried Wade. "Wherein are you and your colleagues any better?"

Dr. Arden smiled. "That is a crucial question," he replied. "These men, these dishonest men of finance, are typical of their class. They are men of the day, and have just enough education to make them wiser than their fellows and yet leave them

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with a conscience, that watch-dog of antiquated principles of right and wrong; they have not enough education to have lost all religion, but sufficient to make them cynics. The principles of right and wrong are not so eternal as yesterday I wanted you to believe; rather they are as arbitrary as laws of legislatures. What is right in one part of the world is wrong in another. But these ignorantly educated men are no better than common criminals, because they have a standard of right, yet they close their eyes to it and do wrong. The Robberies Company, on the other hand, never commits a wrong when it robs. Take for an example the present operation in your house—we expect to net about one hundred thousand dollars profit, the amount needed for our next dividend, yet no wrong will be done.”

Dr. Arden made this last statement quietly as with absolute conviction of the rightness of his contention. His companion leaned back in his chair and gazed at him in amazement.

“What nonsense!” Wade cried, after a moment. “You are talking absurdly.”

“You may think so,” Arden said pleasantly. “Consider this though—the men of the Robberies Company are men of to-morrow, not of to-day. They are thinkers who are a bit in advance of their time. Theories that they might expound to-day

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would be hooted at from every pulpit and lecture platform in the country. To-morrow they will be accepted as true. Were it otherwise we should hardly have working with us a clergyman of the highest integrity and men of his calibre. Mark this—we do not call ourselves the Murders Company, for we kill only in self-defence. In the face of the mystery of life it seems wrong to us to quench that vital spark that was lighted, how we know not, by whom we know not, for what end we know not. For aught we can tell the spark that animates the hideous body of the Patagonian is of the most transcendent importance in this universe, or it may have no more value than the flash that destroys the rubbish heap. Some of the company carry this idea so far as to include all things living and are vegetarians. We do not take a man's life, for it may have value. To take from another anything that has value is a crime. But has man's property any value? He seems to think so, in his ignorance, and has built up an enormous structure of law to protect it. And how blind his law is! For me to take from you the food that sustains your life would undoubtedly be wrong. I admit that. I should be worthy of punishment, say one year in prison. But in Heaven's name of what value is that gold-headed cane of yours that rests there in the corner? It neither warms your body, shel-

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ters your head, nor feeds you, yet were I to run off with it the law would deprive me of my dearest possession, my liberty, for two or three years, calling my crime grand larceny because the stick had a gold knob. Losing that stick, you could pick up another from the wayside that would offer you just as much support, yet you raise a great outcry because your property has been taken. In fact, we can best estimate the value of property by the outcry that is raised when it is lost. If women never locked up their jewels their value would decrease one-half."

"At last I begin to understand your philosophy," Wade interposed. "You consider yourself guilty of no crime when you take my property because my property is of really no value."

"Certainly," returned Arden. He was about to continue, but his attention was arrested by a fine old engraving on the wall opposite him. Rising suddenly, he stepped nearer it, contemplating in silence the mysterious face. "The Mona Lisa," he said musingly. "You have seen it, of course, Captain?"

"I must have," Wade answered. "There is hardly a picture-gallery in Europe that I have not gone through."

The Doctor regarded his companion with a smile as sphinx-like as that created by Leonardo's brush.

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"Doubtless you have read what Pater said of it. He was a queer chap, Pater—I knew him well—always wore hideous yellow gloves. Well, Pater said that in that face were the sorrows of all the ages."

"What has that to do with my cane?" snapped the Captain.

"We were speaking of property," was the reply. "Do you care for the opera?"

"I have a box."

"Then doubtless you are not familiar with the Rheingold—it is never given for the boxes. To me the sorrows of all the ages are in the lament of the Rhine maidens at the loss of the treasure. Listen." Arden stepped to the piano, and with a sure touch played the last bars of the opera. Then he turned quietly to his companion. "Wagner sang better of the fall of man than did the poet Milton. There is a world of meaning in his lines that is lost to most of us. In the first scene where Alberich discovers the gold, we have something like this, for instance: 'Der Welt Erbe gewänne zu eigen, wer aus dem Rheingold schüfe den Ring, der masslose Macht ihm verlieh.'"

Wade was regarding his captor with an expression of extreme perplexity. "I certainly do not remember those words. What have they to do with my gold-headed cane?"

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"Leonardo would have been of the company," said Arden laughing. "He was all-around enough and I think Wagner would have qualified, too, for a great deal of his philosophy coincides with ours. Has not unnecessary property, foolish treasure, brought woe to the world? Take your own. You in your ignorance cherish it. You or your father overworked to obtain it; you are haunted by the fear that you will lose it; you are harassed by ambition to increase it; irritated by jealousy of others who have more of it. Yet did our company undertake to relieve you of it, you would raise a hue and cry that would resound all over the country; you would leave no stone unturned to apprehend us and send us to prison for a long term of years in return for doing you a favor. We should merit that punishment did we take from you the food that sustains you, the clothing that warms you, or the roof that shelters you, but I fail to see where any harm would be done if we walked off with that table on which you never write."

"That table is part of my comfort," said Wade.

Dr. Arden laughed. "You only think it a part of your comfort—a necessity. You have trained yourself to depend on unnecessities. For me I care not so much about the table on which I write as about the thought that I write there. It is no crime for me to take what you think and use it for my

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own pleasure and profit. The thoughts of great men are as free to us as air, but their gold-headed canes, their carved tables, their wives' pearl collars, are sacred property and are treated as of infinitely more value. To take a thing utterly without value is not robbery, and to take from a man what has any value you must rob him of his life, his mind, or his honor."

"An extraordinary theory!" cried the Captain. "Why, Doctor, its general acceptance would upset society."

"And society needs upsetting," returned Arden. "You have but to look at it to realize that. Do not think, however, that our company is composed of socialists or revolutionists. Quite the contrary is true. We do believe that society one hundred years hence will not hold the same absurd views as it does to-day. The revolution is going on now under our very eyes—the revolution of education. As education spreads through all classes, men will set more store by what they have in their heads than by what they have in their houses. People will not slave a lifetime to enjoy at its close the sight of a lot of useless impedimenta. Then we will revert to Rousseau's state of nature, but it will be the nature of the gods and not of animals. The useless luxuries and comforts will have been tried and found wanting. We will find more joy in hurl-

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ing our imagination among the mysteries of the heavens than we do now in shooting our bodies along a dusty road in an automobile."

"There are not many signs of promise," Wade protested. "There is more luxury to-day than ever. People are building larger houses, wearing more clothes, demanding more of everything. Greater store is set by these useless things because we have multiplied them tenfold. One-half of the race works to provide the whole with actual necessities; the other half labors just as hard to produce useless gimcracks, gewgaws, rubbish. But I see no sign of our love for the unnecessaries abating."

"You judge the stream, the volume of water, and the rapidity of its flow by the ripples on the surface," said Arden. "The waves that look so big to one at sea in a storm are hardly worthy of notice to him who sees the whole ocean. Men grow wiser as the world grows older. Fifty years hence our company will have no trouble in filling its directory and in securing competent agents. To-day that is a serious problem. The modern man is a one-sided egotist, and what we need is men who are developed all around, who have brain and brawn, but brains fed by brawn."

"And no morals," interrupted Wade grimly.

"Not the morals of to-day," returned the other.

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"But if you shock the morals of to-day you must suffer for it," said the Captain.

"That is the very strong point about our company," said Arden. "We commit to-day what you call crimes, but we apply intellect to our operations, not the crude intelligence of your financial man or politician who brings on himself the probing eyes of a lot of stupid legislators, but a keen understanding of the world, of men and their motives. To-day it would be said that the company stole a hundred thousand dollars worth of property from the house of Heberton Wade; to-morrow, that it relieved you of a lot of trumpery rubbish that was only a burden to you and a drag to your soul. We care not a fig for the verdict of to-day's ignorance, but we wish to be judged by to-morrow's wisdom."

"Will not to-morrow's wisdom condemn you on the ground that because you took this trumpery property it must have had some value?" asked Wade sharply.

"The point is well taken," Arden returned. "As you look at it now the question is highly proper, but in the future the company's purposes will be known and understood; and while to-day that purpose seems a sordid one, to-morrow the world will recognize the justice of our cause." The Doctor had thrown aside his easy, nonchalant air. Rising and leaning against the mantel, he now

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towered over the Captain, at whom he looked down intently as with great earnestness he argued to justify his deeds. "The suffering we may cause a few poor souls who raise a great outcry over the loss of their precious rubbish, as though on it depended their happiness not in this world alone but in the next—that suffering is lost when the value of our lesson is considered. That useless gold-headed cane of yours has been made sacred not alone by the law of centuries, but theology has stood guard over it as well. The law condemns the man who takes it from you to imprisonment for a definite period; but theology places him in danger of eternal damnation. As long as theology stands as a protector over humanity's useless property, we have a restraining influence that is conducive to comparative order in society. But theology changes. It becomes more liberal in each decade. Old-time theories of future punishment by fire, so effective a check on the passions of the ignorant, are being fast abandoned—even by the Presbyterians. Remove that check entirely and the world will become a hotbed of crime unless we can bring men to a saner view of the value of property; to an appreciation of the things in this life that are really capable of giving happiness. Look at what is done to-day by men of education to increase their possessions. Mere law will be no check to brains

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like these, and as they achieve success at the expense of honor, their number must increase till the fields they work in will not hold them. When finance, railroad deals, speculation, and law fail them, they will begin to crowd out of business the vulgar gangs who waylay us in dark streets, who sneak through unlocked doors, and enter our second-story windows."

"Do you mean to predict that the college graduate without morals and ambitious to obtain riches will turn footpad?" demanded Wade incredulously.

"Yes and no," Arden replied. "He will put the footpad out of business. His methods will not be the same, but blessed with brains and education he will apply his intellect to crime and will become infinitely more dangerous to society. He will not be satisfied with your overcoat, your gold-headed cane, or your teapot—he will take your all. Then every house must be a fort, every home an arsenal; all men will be under suspicion, and this world will become a scene of general strife and distrust. That, sir, is what I see and fear. The hope lies in an organization like ours that before the time has come will have taught humanity a lesson not to be forgotten, will have warned it of its danger, and pointed out the cure."

"Socialism," suggested Wade.

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"Socialism—rot!" cried Arden. "Socialism does not teach the true values of property. It simply aims to distribute the trouble more equally. A man having obtained his due quota of rubbish would sink into profound melancholy that the law allowed him no more. The cure, sir, is to mix common sense with education. The aim of modern education is to teach a man how to acquire riches. The aim of education in the future must be to teach him how to acquire wisdom and knowledge, to give things their right value. Then the club with the longest waiting-list will be one where the wit is keenest, the knowledge the widest, and the men the truest. Is the wide oak in the valley more beautiful because I view it from a marble terrace? Does a row of women, covered with gaudy jewelry, add to the glory of an opera's music? Does the brook sing any sweeter because I, who listen, have on my patent-leather shoes? I was in your criminal courts the other day and saw a former bank officer sent to Sing Sing for ten years for stealing a hundred thousand dollars. Why had he stolen? That he might add to himself property—useless property—a house with ten more rooms than he needed, each room provided with three chairs for every member of his family, who by a law of nature could sit in but one at a time; that his wife might squeeze her fat neck into a collar of pearls,

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and his daughter stick a diamond tiara in her straw-colored hair. That man was the victim of the silly standard of happiness set up by people who pride themselves on their education. It is an absurdity such as this that our company combats."

"What you tell me of your grand motives is highly interesting, Doctor," Wade said cuttingly, "but from my point of view I cannot see that my present treatment is in any way justifiable."

"Undoubtedly it is not from your point of view," Arden said, laughing heartily. "We never expected that it would be. We do not care a rap for your point of view. The company must work out its theories without regard for ignorant opinion." The speaker was lounging toward the door. "I must go now," he added, "as it is nearly time for dinner."

Wade rose quickly and held out a restraining hand. "Dine here with me," he said heartily. "It is wearisome alone, and we can continue our discussion."

"At another time, thank you," Arden returned. "Your courtesy is appreciated, Captain, but my daughter Amy is coming. We are to have a quiet little dinner downstairs and——"

"Perhaps I might join you there," interrupted the Captain eagerly.

"Impossible!" returned Dr. Arden firmly.

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“Besides, we shall hurry away to the theatre. I am to take her to see a company of Italian players at a curious little place in Mulberry Street—they give Tasso’s ‘Jerusalem’ to-night——”

“Could I not go along under parole?” suggested Wade.

“It is impossible!” Arden answered, shaking his head in emphasis. “I am sorry, sir, deeply sorry, but the company must live.”

He took from his pocket a copy of an afternoon paper and handed it carelessly to his prisoner. Thereupon he left the room.

CHAPTER IX

AMY ARDEN

HEBERTON WADE had no reason to suspect that the *Evening Standard* which Arden had handed to him so carelessly contained any explanation of his captivity, so he let the paper drop unopened to the floor, and stood indolently by his chair listening to the footfalls on the stair as the Doctor made his way to his room above. Silence followed. He turned on the light of the reading-lamp and sank wearily into his chair, stretching his legs toward the blaze. Thus he sat a half-hour thinking of nothing, yet of everything. Now his thoughts ran in an ordered channel, seeking to break through the mystery of his strange position; now came disorder, and Georgianna galloped through his brain with Jim, and he quailed under her cold stare, and Jim mocked him, and the wound in his pride opened afresh and he groaned; now Arden held his mind in a spell—Arden the man of the world, of its heights, of its depths, the man of theories so absurd yet uncontrovertible, of practice so strange that he might be criminal, saint, or

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madman. From Arden to the company was a natural turn, and the Captain began to take stock of his household. Which was the learned Orientalist, the dapper Albert, the unctuous Francis, or the towering, glowering Hawkins? Would he be honored with the religious ministrations of the surpliced Nimrod and sonneteer? Would the polo-playing astronomer amuse him with lectures on the heavens? Would the learned Orientalist initiate him into the mysteries of the East? Wade began to laugh softly. There was something so extravagant in the claims made by Arden that he had difficulty in convincing himself that after all he had not been dreaming, yet he knew well enough that he had but to ring the bell to bring him proof. Just two nights ago he had sat in that same chair with Jim beside him, the fire blazing then as now, he sitting a blind man, an egotist, who knew all of life, who had all life offered in his grasp, who had tried that all and found it wearying. Of ambition he had none, for ambition offered him nothing that was not his already. To him ambition meant acquiring place and fortune, and these he had. Now Arden had come with his lesson, had taught him that there was a game worth playing, a new game, with all mad humanity as an antagonist, the world as a field, and right as its goal. There was danger in it to double its appeal. This was no contest for carpet-slip-

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pered preachers. It needed men of wit and muscle; men who could battle against life's current undaunted by its little ripples, and reach its source, to change the whole course of it and send it through a fairer country. What is said is not one whit less true or false because of him who says it, Arden had declared; and even did Wade doubt his strange captor, there was wisdom in his words. But Wade believed in the company. His position was such as to convince him of its power. Of its philanthropy he even now had little question. He wanted to be of it. It was not so much its ethics that called to him as the joy of the conflict. He wanted to know these strong men and their secrets, to stand side by side with them in the battle, and to share with them the victory. But he was barred. Arden had decreed it. He was barred by his ignorance of life, he who thought himself so schooled in it. That galled him. Pricked by his pride, he sprang from his chair and began to pace up and down the room impatiently. He could learn. He had a brain. He, too, could go from polo to a study of the stars; he, too, could turn from racquets to the mysteries of the East; he, too, could dive from his yacht's deck into the dark depths of metaphysics.

On the table were a half-dozen of the novels of the month, hideous in their fancy covers, trifling

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faces, and Wade caught these angrily in his arm and swept them to the floor, thus registering his vow to put aside childish things. In the first flush of determination he turned to the cases that lined the room, high-rising shelves, filled with portentous volumes, leather-bound, and holding in their uncut pages half the wisdom of the world. They had come to him from his father in their pristine beauty, and had made fine furniture for his library, but he had led too busy a life to delve much into their depths. Now in his need he went to them. He glanced over a score of titles, seeking one that offered him a start on the road to wisdom. Memoirs and history were passed by as useless. He shook his head at Carlyle, and turned up his nose at Macaulay. Sir Thomas Browne was taken out, inspected, and returned for another time. Marcus Aurelius offered nothing that he did not already know. Plato's "Republic" looked forbidding in its extent, and he cared not how to govern a petty kingdom, so skipped by Machiavelli. Here his hand paused. He had found the beginning. Arden had said that to understand the company you must know men, and to know men you must know their minds. Here was the key to the mind, and Wade took it eagerly and fixed himself by the light.

It seemed to the Captain that he had been read-

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ing a very long time, when he paused for a mental breath, marking his place with his forefinger, closing the book over it, and looking up at the clock. It was not yet seven, and he had been studying less than a half-hour. He turned curiously to the book to find himself only at page four and just discovering what the word "idea" stood for. Truly learning comes only with labor. But he was determined and plunged on in search of it. Then Arden entered, perfect for evening, and stood over him, looking quizzically from the *Standard*, lying unopened on the floor, to his prisoner, who was lost in a solemn volume.

"What is the work that you find so absorbing?" inquired the Doctor pleasantly.

"Locke on the 'Human Understanding,'" said Wade, looking up with a smile. "I am studying for the company."

Arden laughed heartily. "A worthy ambition," he cried. "But, remember, it will take you years to be prepared for the entrance examination. Let me warn you—when you understand Locke you will have to take up Hume, Kant, and Spencer and a half-dozen others to find out where he was wrong. Then you must work over a dozen or so more learned treatises to know wherein these critics were right. By the time you are fifty you may have a little idea concerning what is really known of the

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mind and the soul. Still, do not let me discourage you in a laudable purpose."

"You do not discourage me—Locke does," said Wade gravely. "Nevertheless I shall persevere."

"The effect will be seen in your children, should you ever be blessed with any," Arden said encouragingly. "Though you might fail to attain that high degree of all-aroundness required for our work, you may be preparing your offspring for a nobler life, Captain. Keep on——"

"My problem is not to make life interesting for descendants, not even mythical in their reality, but to get something out of it myself," Wade interrupted. "But this metaphysics is a chilling plunge for one's high motives. How about astronomy? It certainly sounds more attractive."

Dr. Arden picked the *Standard* from the floor and laid it ostentatiously on the arm of the Captain's chair.

"Astronomy is a delightful pastime," he said. "I have paid a good deal of attention to it myself. Did it ever strike you as curious, by the way, to see four so-called intelligent persons sitting in a close, smoky room for a whole evening playing bridge, when their house afforded them an observatory from which they could study problems of far greater interest? Now I am fond of bridge, too—but I am rambling away on one of my theories and

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it is nearly seven. Amy will be here any minute, and I must go downstairs to meet her. Perhaps I shall see you later, Captain."

Left alone thus suddenly, Wade turned again to his book. An interminable time he read, concentrating his mind on the tiny print, and while he found the argument against innate principles not hard to understand, it was strangely uninteresting. Two pages of it wearied him intensely. He would not own that, but laid aside the book with the intention of picking it up again when he had pondered over what he had already read. It seemed that his memory must have failed him, for after all his study had given his mind nothing to chew on, and he was so chagrined at his own incapacity for the subject that he tossed the book on the table with a sigh and picked up the paper.

The face that looked forth at Wade from the page was familiar. Most persons would recognize themselves did they meet on the street, and this particular likeness was an excellent one. The Captain stared at it for a moment as if to put it out of countenance for its audacity in appearing in such a place. Then a cupid hovering over it with its pointed finger called his glance to the companion portrait, to that same high-bred English girl who had stared at me so coldly in the club that morning.

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"The future Lady Victoria Wade," read the Captain aloud.

In like case most men would have vented their astonishment in rather strong language, but the two days past had been so full of amazing events for Wade that he had ceased to be surprised at anything. His first thought was that he had fallen asleep over the abstruse philosophy of John Locke, Gentleman, and he rubbed his eyes and read again. There could be no question of it. His picture was there before him with this strange English beauty's; over it hovered a cupid; under it she was proclaimed to the world as his bride-to-be, and all around in clear, bold type was the story of his romance. The heavy black letters of the headline that half filled the first column told him quickly of his fate:

TO WED NOBLEWOMAN

CAPTAIN WADE ENGAGED TO LADY
VICTORIA GLYME

HE HAS APPENDICITIS

WEDDING PLANS CHANGED BY GROOM'S SUDDEN
ILLNESS

SHE SAILS FOR NEW YORK

CEREMONY TO TAKE PLACE IN CAPTAIN'S HOUSE
HERE

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"The company!" cried Wade. He brought his fist down on the arm of his chair with a crash, but with that blow all the anger went out of him and he burst into a laugh.

In a few moments more he knew his whole story. It was told there much as I had read it in the morning edition except that it was rather more embellished, as the sudden illness of the hero and the change in the wedding plans had added heart interest to the match. A touching picture was presented of the gallant Captain being stricken with appendicitis and laid helpless beneath the surgeon's knife at the moment of his parting for a foreign shore to claim his bride. With like facility were described the distress at Garchester Towers, where the girl was awaiting his coming, the sudden abandonment of the plans for an English rural wedding, with arches and tenantry and all that, and at last the Lady Victoria's hurried, anxious journey across the sea to nurse him. This, solemnly told, this with the long account of his own eventless career, Burke's brief record of the Glymes, and of the story of the meeting and his wooing and winning at first appealed to his deep-seated sense of humor, and Wade laughed uproariously. Then he leaned back and began to think. With thinking he became sober. The company's hand was in this, he had no doubt, but what was

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the purpose of it? The mystery grew deeper. They might knock him down and shackle him, they might imprison him and murder him without danger to themselves, they might bind him as he was now, helpless by his word of honor, but how could these men, wise though they were, marry him to this English woman, this perfect stranger? Even his word of honor might be stretched to a breaking point. They could not starve him into matrimony. Then where was the profit in marrying him off, granted that were possible? If there was a profit in it, why did they take this extraordinary way of calling in all the town to witness their plotting? There was no answer to these questions. The whole story must be a fiction, but as a fiction the enigma was as difficult as ever. This announcement was a part of the company's plan, a step in that operation which Arden had boasted would yield such large profits, yet do him no harm. Harm had already been done him. All of Arden's philosophy would not soften Georgianna's heart toward one who had treated her so brutally.

Now Wade began to storm up and down the room. He believed that he loved Georgianna. When he remembered her he surely did, but there had been much in these two days to drive her from his mind. He remembered her now, and he groaned. What would she say when she saw that

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infernal paper? One day he sits at her side pleading with her to love him; the next he slights her brutally, and then announces that he is to marry another. Worse, he vaunts it forth in the papers, boastingly, in columns and columns, with pictures and life histories. The company had gone too far! Georgianna's judgment to-day was what he wanted, not that of a hundred years hence, when Arden and his comrades had accomplished their high purpose in the cause of humanity. They, indeed, viewed the whole ocean in which he was but a ripple. He could not see so far as they, and when he came to a choice between Georgianna and humanity he had no indecision.

"Hang humanity!" he cried, ringing the bell violently.

Albert came, unhurried, and Wade faced him with the paper.

"You have read that nonsense?" he cried, waving the *Standard* under the servant's chin.

"Yes," said Albert, calm and unflinching. The corners of his mouth twitched into a slight smile, all the more exasperating the Captain.

"Well, what are you and your infernal company driving at?" demanded Wade.

"I am only an agent, sir," answered the man quietly. "I am not permitted to speak. The directors are very deep, sir, very deep."

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"Well, call Arden," cried Wade. "I won't stand this a minute longer, and am going to have it explained. This thing has gone too far."

"Too far!" said Albert coolly. "Captain Wade, you talk like a fool. The company has you in its power, and graciously allows you life and a little freedom, instead of knocking you on the head. You forget and conduct yourself like a man who has a right to control his own actions. Let me warn you——"

"Call Arden," ordered Wade, shaking his fist under the other's nose.

Albert stood his ground.

"The Doctor will not be disturbed," he said. "He is downstairs waiting for Miss Arden and does not wish to be bothered by complaints. Is there anything else?"

There was one thing else. Wade wanted to knock the man down, and had Albert shown any sign of fire the Captain would have struck him. But the servant had been quick to recover his composure, and stood there so impassive that Wade could not strike. He could feel this wooden creature, walk over him, and out of the house. Then what? It was not Albert that held him.

The paper rattled to the floor. The hands fell to his side, and he swore softly, hopelessly.

"If you refuse to summon Dr. Arden, I shall call

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him myself," he said firmly, stepping past the man into the dark hall.

Albert did not try to block him, but waited.

The Captain reached the head of the stairs, the limit of his parole, and resting his hands on the banister, leaned over to hurl down his summons to the Doctor. That summons did not leave his lips. He drew back into the darkness quickly, and then with great caution, that his presence might not be discovered, he peered into the hall below, at the radiant Amy Arden.

Heberton Wade knew Amy Arden. He had seen her before ten thousand times. Yes, ten thousand times had he looked into those blue eyes, had he watched the dimples sport with the roses over those white rounded cheeks, had he seen the light play over that wavy golden hair. Ten thousand times, from the firelight, from the cloudland, from the dim distances of his lonely room, she had bent that slender, sinuous figure toward him, she had reached out those small white hands, she had laughed—and gone from him. And he had stretched out his hands to her, had called wildly to her to turn and come to him, but she never answered, only kept flitting, flitting through his dreams till he despaired of ever knowing more than the lovely mocking shadow. When Georgianna came he was not deceived. This was not the girl, lovely though this

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girl was. That day when she galloped into his life, he knew he had met her before, but it was in a ballroom, a garish ballroom, in stifling air, under gaudy lights, with chattering humans jostling them at every side. This evening when Amy Arden came, he knew that they had met before, and had their glances crossed he would have been shocked had she not recognized him. He had seen her not in the noisy, gaudy dance, but as he sat alone in the quiet of the evening, in the hour of meditation, as he sat smoking, his eyes closed, and wandered the world over in all time and all place, as he sat dreaming, and she flitted to and fro before him. She was no longer the mocking fancy. He heard her speak in greeting to her father, a remark so commonplace that it could not but be real. He saw her bend, as before she had bent to him, but now it was to reach the glass and readjust her hair, and no mere shadow would bite upon a bonnet pin in a fashion so womanly, or hold it at an angle so distractingly absurd. She did not look up. Had their eyes met, Wade would have hailed her joyfully, but she turned to Francis and handed him her coat, she took her father's arm affectionately, and disappeared into the drawing-room.

At last Wade was possessed of a fool!

He smiled softly. Then his face became grave, and he turned and stalked into the library.

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"Albert," he said pleasantly, "you may go. There is nothing more now."

"No dinner, sir?" asked the man, amazed at the sudden change.

"Oh, yes, some dinner," the Captain answered. "There is no hurry—suit yourself."

He sat down in his chair, and leaned toward the fire, his elbows on his knees, his chin clasped in his hands, and gazed solemnly into the flames.

CHAPTER X

I TALK WITH ARDEN

FROM a window of the Wanderers I watched the rain dripping outside in a steady down-pour that closed in the avenue so heavily that the houses across the way were shadowy in form. The lights were burning in the great gloomy lounging-room, though it was morning, hardly past the breakfast hour, and a drearier sight was hard to imagine, yet to me the world was bright, a strange contrast to yesterday, when I had sat so moodily looking into sparkling sunshine and crisp air. Now I smoked smilingly, sitting erect, contemplating the soddenness without. I had a right to smile. In my hand was Georgianna's note beginning with that illuminating sentence, "Come and take tea with me at five."

The bidding was not at all unusual. Many times before I had received that same command with curious thoughtlessness, lightly tossing aside the paper fragments. Now I folded it carefully and stowed it away in my pocket, to rest there a minute,

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to come out again and be reread, though I knew its every word.

"Is it not splendid about Captain Wade!" she wrote, emphasizing her pleasure with exclamation-points. "I want to hear all about it from you. But what kind of a man really is he! Do you know him well or were you as much surprised as I about this Lady Victoria? You never mentioned her to me, and I am sure he did not, though I have seen a good deal of him in the last few weeks, and he never showed any indications of being in love with anybody. Men do shown signs, don't they? Still I suppose one of that age is better trained. You must be very jealous of Lady Victoria, you are such a good friend of his—I see by the papers that you are to be best man. Isn't it romantic about him having appendicitis and her coming over to nurse him?"

I should have liked to show that letter to Wade, there was something so charmingly naïve about it, and he could afford now to laugh at the little cut about his great age. I certainly should have shown it to him had I been able to see him, but that privilege was denied me by the watchful Dr. Arden, who insisted that his patient have absolute quiet for two weeks. I had appealed to him through Morton the night before, and had received word that the Captain was so upset by his engagement and the

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change in his wedding plans, and was so fretful under restraint, that it would be extremely unwise to allow him even the slight excitement of a visit. I accepted that verdict and contented myself with keeping posted on the trend of affairs in the Gramercy Park house through telephone conversations with that admirable master-servant. And after all what Georgianna thought was of little moment now except to me. Wade was too occupied with thoughts of Lady Victoria, the high-bred, high-headed English beauty, to heed the quiet jibes of his simple little saddle friend. As for my own mind, Wade was not much in it. For a time he passed from it entirely, as I sat smoking and smiling in contentment, the note safely folded away in my pocket. Then Knowlton came to call him back.

Knowlton was tremendously interested in Wade's romance. For a whole day he had talked of nothing else, and now he came into the lounging-room carrying a half-dozen morning papers, settled in the chair opposite me, and began to read about it.

"The *Standard* still has it on the front page, Jim," he began, unfolding that excellently respectable journal. "They have managed to squeeze it into a column though. 'Captain Wade better—Wedding to take place January 18th—

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Surgeon's statement of plans—Lady Victoria Glyme to sail next week.' ”

“ What does the surgeon say? ” I inquired.

Knowlton ran his eye down the column and then read: “ A reporter for the *Standard* saw Dr. Edward Arden, the surgeon who performed the operation, at Captain Wade's house last evening, as he was about setting out for the theatre. ‘ The patient's condition is excellent,’ he said, ‘ and he should be able to leave his bed in a few weeks unless unlooked-for complications set in. The Captain has expressed the wish to have as little delay as possible regarding the wedding, and acting on the belief that he will be far enough recovered is arranging to have the ceremony here on January 18th. Lady Victoria Glyme cabled us to-day that she sails on the *Oceanic* on the tenth, two weeks from to-day. She had expected to start sooner, but we notified her that it was unnecessary.’ ‘ Will the ceremony be held in the sick-room? ’ was asked. ‘ I hardly think so,’ replied Dr. Arden. ‘ We expect to have it in the drawing-room, the Captain sitting in his chair. He is very anxious to have his friends present, and will ask about one hundred of his most intimate.’ ‘ Will the Earl of Garchester accompany his sister? ’ was asked. ‘ That I cannot say,’ replied the Doctor. ‘ I have no knowledge of his plans.’ ‘ We have a despatch

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from London in our office saying that considerable surprise has been expressed there over the engagement, as Lady Victoria is fifty-seven years of age,' said the reporter. At this Dr. Arden laughed heartily. 'That is an absurd mistake,' he said. 'I have the privilege of the young lady's acquaintance, and if she is a day older than twenty-seven I must be blind. It is evident that your correspondent has confused her with some elderly relative. However, she will be here on the seventeenth of next month and you can judge for yourself.' "

Knowlton stopped reading and inquired of me, "By the way, Jim, do you know this Arden?"

"I do not," I answered. "His name is absolutely new to me, for I never heard Heberton speak of him, but that is not surprising, as Wade has so many acquaintances everywhere. Morton tells me that he is an old friend—from Baltimore, I believe."

"Well, why don't you call him up instead of the butler," said Knowlton. "He seems to be a good sort."

The suggestion was a wise one. It had not occurred to me before that it would be sensible for me to communicate directly with the man now in charge of my friend's affairs, for Morton was so much trusted by Wade, so well informed as to everything that concerned him and so thoroughly

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competent that I had depended on him absolutely. Indeed, when I went to the telephone now to make my morning inquiry I hardly expected more of the surgeon than of the servant, except that he might set forth the facts regarding the patient's condition in a little more detail.

"I should like to talk to Dr. Arden," I said, when I heard Morton at the other end of the wire.

"I will get him for you, sir," replied the butler without hesitation, "though I could tell you everything. Just at this moment he is busy upstairs in the Captain's room. Will you hold the wire?"

For five minutes there was silence. Then a voice rather high pitched and metallic, but not unpleasant, hailed me.

"Mr. Rollins—hello—hello—this is Dr. Arden."

"Good morning, Doctor," I said. "How is our sick friend?"

"Doing very well indeed," came the hopeful answer. "I have every reason to expect that he will recover rapidly now. Indeed, as you have probably seen by the morning papers, he has set the date for the wedding—January 18th. He insists, and I have promised to bring him around in time. He must have absolute quiet until then. Either myself or Dr. Hawkins, my assistant, is with him continually. I am very glad I happened to be in town the night when he was taken ill. It

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was most fortunate. I had run over from Baltimore for a day or two, and chanced to see him that morning on Fifth Avenue. As I have not been in active practice for some years I was able to give him my whole attention."

"It was most fortunate indeed," said I heartily. "His friends will not forget your kindness."

"Nonsense," returned the Doctor, laughing. "Why, I'd do anything for Hebby Wade. His father was one of my best friends, and I have known him since he was a child. Enough of that, though. There is another thing, Mr. Rollins——"

"Yes, Doctor."

"It's about the invitations—the Captain and I were discussing it this morning, and he suggested that I get your opinion. You see, he has to make the wedding arrangements, contrary to usual custom, as the ceremony will be held here, and he had some doubts as to the wording. It doesn't seem right to say 'Mr. Heberton Wade requests the honor.' There will only be about one hundred close friends asked, and he thought of having Morton write personal notes in his name."

"A sensible idea," said I. "Everybody understands."

"We had about settled on that when we received a cable from Garchester saying he was coming over with his sister," the Doctor went on. "It then oc-

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curred to us that a much easier way would be to send out cards reading, 'The Earl of Garchester requests the honor of your company at the marriage of his sister, Lady Victoria Glyme to,' and so forth. That's the way it would have been on the other side."

"It seems to me that that is a still better plan," said I, for somehow this invitation had a high sound that pleased me, and you know I was to be best man. "Can I help you attend to it?"

"You need not trouble," Dr. Arden answered. "This is a very simple matter, and Morton will look after it. He is thoroughly competent. However, I should like to meet you some day soon and talk over matters."

"To-night, Doctor," said I quickly. "Dine with me here at the Wanderers."

"I am sorry, but I cannot leave my patient this evening. I must stay by him for some nights. How about next week—say Tuesday."

"At seven," said I.

"At seven, Tuesday, then," he answered. "Thank you. Call me up at ten to-morrow and——"

"Dr. Arden," I interrupted quickly, "before you go tell me something about Lady Victoria Glyme—you know her, I see."

"Slightly," he answered. "I met her in London

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at a little dinner Wade gave there for her. She is a lovely woman, Mr. Rollins, and I consider our friend the luckiest man alive."

"Is she as good-looking as the papers make her out?"

"She is lovely—absolutely lovely!" cried the Doctor enthusiastically, "and as clever as can be. As a matter of fact, I never thought Wade would win. It certainly looked as if she had given him his walking papers last fall when he came home, but it seems that there was an understanding of some kind between them then. But we shall talk of that when we meet."

"I shall wait impatiently," said I. "You know this is all a complete surprise to me."

"Undoubtedly," returned the Doctor with a pleasant laugh. "It must be to all his friends. At seven, Tuesday, then. Good-by."

"Arden seems a very decent fellow," I said to Knowlton when I rejoined him. "He dines with me on Tuesday. Join us."

"I shall be out of town," he said. "Sorry, Jim. I should like to meet that man though."

With that he returned to his reading.

CHAPTER XI

THE SOLDIER AND METAPHYSICIAN

IT was early on Saturday morning, the fifth day of Heberton Wade's captivity by the Advanced Robberies Company, Limited. By the fire in the library, alone, watching the door and listening, stood Arden, the director of this remarkable crime. He smoked impatiently, now and then turning his head and glancing at the clock behind him. The hand crossed one, and he lighted another cigar and puffed furiously at it. Another quarter-hour passed, and he began to pace anxiously up and down the room. At last he turned to the window, and, throwing up the shade, pressed his eyes against the pane and peered out into the night. It was snowing heavily, and the sickly street lamp before the house hardly pierced the storm. Beyond that dimly lighted circle he could see nothing, but he kept his gaze fixed there intently. For another quarter-hour he watched till two dark forms came plunging head on into the light and turned up the stoop. No exclamation escaped the Doctor. He quietly pulled down the shade, closed the cur-

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tains, and returned to his post by the fire, but now a smile was playing around the corners of his mouth. In a few minutes Wade entered, bright-eyed, face all aglow, and greeted him cheerily.

"It was splendid!" he cried, rubbing his cold hands close to the flames. "There is something inspiring in battling with the elements. A fair-day walk is an insipid thing compared to forcing your way through a storm. There is pleasure in feeling that primitive strength which can laugh at sleet and snow and wind and lets us toss them all aside as carelessly as any other brute does."

"Exactly," returned Arden. "I am glad you enjoyed it, Captain. I told our directors last night that your confinement was beginning to tell on you, and that you needed exercise. I felt that we could trust your honor even in allowing you to leave the house."

"I appreciate the compliment," said the other heartily.

"But what kept you out so long?" inquired Arden. "You were an hour over time in returning, and I confess that I was filled with doubt and anxiety."

"It was not my fault," Wade replied. "Hawkins was to blame. We went up Lexington Avenue, as I promised, and you need have no fear that in

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such a snow I was not well muffled up. Around Sixtieth Street your man spied a poor devil lying half-frozen in an areaway. We should have turned then, but my guard insisted that he would not see any human creature suffer like that, and made me help get the fellow over to a lodging-house on Third Avenue, where we thawed him out and fed him and put him to bed. That took so long we had to come back on a car."

"That is just like Hawkins," cried Arden sharply. "He is always forgetting the great purpose of the company for some petty human call. I lose all patience with him at times, yet it is hard to reprimand him."

"Don't be severe with him, Doctor," said Wade gently. "I forgave him for all his brutality to me the other night when I saw him pick that poor devil from the gutter as gently as a child."

"What is one poor devil in the gutter now," returned the other hotly, "when we put him in the balance against the poor devils who will be there for all time unless the company can teach men to live?"

Arden usually spoke quietly, in a voice so well modulated as to be almost void of expression, but now he was wrought up as Wade had never seen him, and he seemed rather one pleading with all mad humanity than addressing a single stolid crea-

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ture, who tasted only the foam of life and never the refreshing waters of its depths.

"The company does not care for the suffering of to-day," Arden went on. "Its work is for the centuries to come. Did we take so narrow a view we should go like Thoreau and live by Walden Pond, and the world would call us interesting theorists and idealists. Even he went back to his impedi-menta. He had the right idea. Scores of other wise men have had it and taught it, but those who have listened have been the pedants, spectacled dreamers—all the rest have gone on unheeding. Montaigne says that to judge a horse we strip him of his trappings, but when we judge a man we bury him under a weight of useless furniture. In centuries no one has controverted him, yet we go on grabbing, struggling, cutting one another's throats for trappings, for gold-headed canes, and pearl collars. Now is the time for men of action, men of keen wit and hard muscles. We have scoured the world. The Orient has offered us little, for the fatalistic philosophy of the East does not breed men who will battle against existing order. So we have had to draw from a narrow field and but few have qualified. Every man of them is precious. At the discovery of Hawkins we were particularly gratified. You know his physical strength. He has a mind besides, and a heart, but that heart will every

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now and then break away from the control of his head, and it is in this that he is dangerous to us. He cannot forget the ripples when he contemplates the whole current. He would give anything in furtherance of the company's purpose. He now humbles himself to tend the furnace in this house; in the morning you can see him shovelling snow off the sidewalk, and yet in a forgetful moment, for some silly sentimentality, he would wreck the whole beautiful fabric we are building up."

A silence followed between the two men. Arden stretched out in his favorite chair and studied the ceiling until the troubled look had left his face and he could speak again in his even voice.

"You understand, Captain Wade, why I am put out at Hawkins," he said, after a few minutes. "Fortunately no harm was done to-night, but I was very uneasy."

"He did not destroy your beautiful fabric," returned Wade, drawing up a chair. "It seems to me that you should fear the police rather than this soft-hearted giant and intellectual thief."

The Doctor resumed his old, easy manner. "Of the police the company has no fear," he said laughing. "They might be a bugaboo to ignorance, but never to intelligence. It is a curious reflection on the present state of society that it should choose its protectors from the same class from which it gets

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its ditch-diggers and car-conductors. As a matter of fact, police work requires the same degree of intelligence as does the pulpit or the operating-room. The policeman should be on a plane with the clergyman or the physician. That is one of the points that will be brought out clearly by the company, though, of course, when we have taught humanity the right value of property and the real sources of pleasure, police will be no longer necessary. You see——”

Wade did not see. His midnight walk in the storm had jogged up his blood, and his brain was clear and his spirits were high. He interrupted with a laugh.

“Pardon me, Dr. Arden,” he said, “but I cannot help being amused when I hear you talk so seriously of your great purposes and then think of my own situation. Indeed, that situation would have long since become intolerable to me had I not a sense of humor. There is something fascinating about the strangeness, the incongruity, the mystery of this whole proceeding. Otherwise do you think I should be sitting here calmly while you are bombarding the town with stories about my coming wedding to a woman I have never heard of?”

“Of course not,” said the Doctor pleasantly. “That was all considered when the operation was

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planned. We had studied your character. We knew you."

Wade was taken back by this quiet assurance.

"Do you mean to tell me that you knew beforehand just how I should act?" he cried.

"We had a general idea," was the calm answer. "Now take last night, when you read that account of your coming wedding. Remember, to the world outside, those not in the secret, there was nothing extraordinary about it. You were at first amazed. Then the absurdity of it struck you, and you were amused. Then you saw the trouble that it might cause you and flew into a rage."

"Precisely," said Wade. "Of course, some one was watching me."

"No," answered Dr. Arden. "We were all downstairs till you sent for Albert. He reported you in a fury. To tell the truth, he expected a serious outbreak and was prepared for you. But there you upset our calculations, and I confess I have puzzled all day over it. Your conduct was not logical. You should have called me, and I should have had to quiet you either by an appeal to reason or a blow on the head. But Albert tells me that you suddenly became as meek as a lamb. Now it is for you to enlighten me."

Wade made no reply. He arose suddenly and hurried around the table, where he busied himself

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finding the cigars and matches, and when he was settled again to smoke it was at such an angle that Arden could not see him without turning his head. But the Doctor did not take that trouble. Disregarding the evasion he went on like one stating a difficult mathematical problem. "This morning I purposely sent up the papers early that you might read the latest product of the company's press bureau regarding your wedding and illness, and when I came upstairs it was in expectation of serious trouble. To my surprise I found you sitting in that very chair smiling like an idiot. You seemed to have no realization of what might be in store for you. Instead of rising and abusing me as you generally do, you made only a mild formal protest against the stories we have been circulating. It is extraordinary!"

"But you assured me that the company had no intention of trying to make me marry Lady Victoria Glyme," said Wade, laughing.

"That was not enough," returned Arden. "You should at least have stormed a little. Instead, you settled down and went on reading."

"After you refused to explain what it all meant," the Captain retorted sharply.

"I distrust a calm like that," said the Doctor, rising and taking his old favorite post by the fire. It was an attitude he always assumed in his graver

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moods, for as the two men were now, the captor stood over his prisoner, regarding him with that steady gaze full of conscious power and superiority. "I prefer the storm blown out to the storm brewing, Captain. I might as well tell you now what this story means that we have sent abroad. But you must control yourself."

Wade started to rise.

"Be seated," said Arden firmly, with a gesture of command, which was obeyed. "Of course to the company this operation is but one of a sequence by which it will demonstrate the truth of its theories. To you it will seem of great moment, and likely to cause you much embarrassment. When you hear the truth you will want to use violence, but remember first your word, Captain, and then consider that you are only alive by sufferance. You are in our power. My hand now is on the button that will call enough agents to end your struggles—perhaps forever. Don't argue. The company has no time to waste with the sophistry of to-day. Do you understand?"

"Certainly," Wade answered calmly. He was not alarmed. His safety and the sacredness of his property had been assured, and he could return the steady gaze as steadily, and evince no other sign than of deep interest.

"You will notice," Arden went on easily, but

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with each word coming with hammer-like distinctness, "that in to-day's paper we say that but one hundred of your closest friends will be asked to the wedding. As a matter of fact this morning the company delivered five thousand cards of invitation. The list included all those in that very exclusive set of which you are such a distinguished figure. But, besides, many are asked whom you do not know—the climbers, Captain, the people of means who have gratified every ambition but the highest—to be in society. Think what it means to them to be known as one of the hundred, the chosen hundred of the smartest, who will be at the wedding of the mighty Heberton Wade to the noble Lady Victoria Glyme, daughter of an English peer, and friend of the Queen."

Wade smiled. His mind at the moment did not grasp the significance of the facts presented him. They all seemed part of a grotesque joke.

"Don't laugh," said Arden gravely. "Think—think what the Nevada miner said when that card reached his hideous marble palace on Fifth Avenue. And his wife and his daughters—what must have been their elation? They will pay for it, Captain, willingly, richly. A diamond tiara will not be too good for them to send to Lady Victoria Glyme."

The company's secret was out! Wade grasped it

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quickly. He saw the plan in all its fulness. He saw its strength in its very absurdity, its simplicity in its novelty, its safety in its incredibility. Truly the company applied intellect to crime! But in the philanthropic purpose of that crime he had no faith now. These clever scoundrels were not robbing him. Worse! He was the instrument by which they were mulcting all the town. They did not depend on blackjacks and pistols; they had no need to climb in second-story windows or waylay their quarry in dark streets. They worked with knowledge and preyed on human kindness, on vanity and silly ambition. And he was a hundred times more their victim than if they had forced him alone to pay tribute, for the obligation would lie with him to make restitution to all who had suffered through the misuse of his name. In spite of Arden, Wade still believed it suffering to lose property, and he saw that when the company had filled its chest with loot and disappeared, the truth must come out, and he would have to face the ridicule of the world. He would be doubted; he would be laughed at, hooted at, lampooned; he would be called mad, weak, cowardly. One-half of his friends would suspect him of complicity in the crime; the others would regard him as a joke. All through life he would be known not for his riches, for his position, his brains, but for the remarkable

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fraud in which he was the central figure. His most precious possession, his dignity, was gone. His position was plain. His duty was clear. And had he been dealing with a ruffian he would have flown at him, but this handsome, quiet man, this polished citizen of the world, seemed to hold him in a spell, standing there over him, regarding him with steady eyes.

"You are a pretty pack of thieves," the Captain cried, throwing himself back in his chair and glaring at the Doctor.

"Now you are behaving more naturally," Arden returned, smiling.

"Your foolish philosophy simmers down to the fact that you are gathering in a lot of plunder for your own use like any other gang of thieves," Wade said, now speaking quietly, for he was in full control of himself.

"It is not necessary for me to explain what we do with that plunder," Arden returned. "But let me assure you that not one cent's worth of it will ever go into the pockets of a member of the company. What do we want with the stream of trumpery rubbish that has been set flowing into your house? It has no value for us. We don't care a fig for your silver punch-bowls, your pearl collars, your heaps of spoons, your gold-headed canes, and rickety writing-desks—not a fig, Captain. If any

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one sent you an idea and we confiscated it, then we should be thieves indeed. Did your physician give you a new formula for some balm to human suffering and we make off with it, we should be murderers. But what harm do we do you or your friends when we disappear with this pile of property, that to you and to them can only be a cause of trouble? A punch-bowl came this afternoon, a solid silver punch-bowl, worth one thousand dollars as you estimate, but as we see it the world will be one punch-bowl richer when it is gone. And there is your friend Rollins, the cynical fellow, who one day doubts whether life is worth living, and the next seeks to reconcile Lady Victoria Glyme to it by giving her a pearl thingumbob which an expert declares cost him five thousand dollars. So you see——”

“I don’t see,” interrupted Wade angrily. “Jim Rollins has only twenty thousand a year and it’s an infernal——”

“He has about eighteen thousand more than he needs,” laughed Arden. “Of course, if he knew how to spend it that would be different, but, poor devil, he——”

Wade sprang to his feet. The thought uppermost in his mind was to secure his pistol, almost at his hand, but not to betray himself he stood glaring at the Doctor as if in impotent rage, while he

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backed nearer and nearer the desk and the precious weapon. He expected Arden to fly at him when he divined his prisoner's purpose. And Arden did divine it! He let Wade's hand touch the knob of the drawer.

"It is still there, Captain," he said, smiling. "But just to support your word of honor I have rung the bell."

Upstairs and down sounded a confusion of voices and hurrying feet. Wade was stayed. The mere fact that the company in its consciousness of power had disdained to take away the weapon filled him with dread of its might. He wanted to fight, but not with the means that it gave him, and it was useless to attack with bare fists this quiet man, who seemed to offer no injury except to smile exasperatingly. Then the agents were coming in force to overpower him. They were on the stairs. He folded his arms and stood calmly erect, waiting to receive them. Now they were in the hall, but came no farther. Wade glanced inquiringly at Arden.

"I presume you have regained your senses," said the Doctor dryly.

"I have," Wade answered, with a bow of mock politeness.

"Baron!" called the other sharply.

Wade started. He heard a new name, and before

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him he saw a new face. It was not the addition of a single man to the force of his enemies that made the toils press him closer, but the character of this agent seemed to support all Arden had said of his mysterious company. He was of medium height, with a figure not too heavy, but strongly knit, and his closely cropped blond hair, his mustache brushed upward from the lips, his cheeks all smeared with ugly scars, marked him a German gentleman, while his carriage was unmistakably that of a soldier. He stood at attention, regarding Wade with mild blue eyes.

"This, Captain, is Prussia's representative in the company," said Arden pleasantly. "Besides being one of the finest cavalry officers in the Kaiser's army, he is a musician and is deeply learned in metaphysics."

The German bowed gravely.

Heborton Wade, a gentleman himself, knew a gentleman even when he was a scoundrel, and returned the salutation with perfect sincerity. Then the sneer left his face and with it the blood went, too, and he stood, rigid, coldly eying this newest of his enemies.

"The Captain is himself again," said Arden softly. "You may go, Baron. Tell the others."

The German made an about-face, and strode from the room. For a minute the steady shuffle

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of retreating feet sounded upstairs and down; then silence followed.

Wade's eyes met those of Arden.

"Good God, man!" he cried. "What is this infernal company of yours? Are you a pack of d——d villains or of madmen?"

The Doctor answered in a voice in which there was a ring of friendliness and sympathy. "Calm yourself, Captain. I have told you what the company is. Believe me."

"But you promised no harm to me," returned Wade hotly. "Can't you see that you are working ruin for me?"

"Ruin—absurd!" Arden exclaimed, with a gesture of weariness. "When we are gone tell the world the simple truth—that is what we want."

"And the world will hoot at me."

"What is that to you if what you say is true," said the Doctor. "Do what is right yourself, and smile at the jeering fools. The company will strike again—many times."

He stepped toward the Captain with a hand outstretched.

"Come," he said kindly, "let us be friends."

Heberton Wade folded his arms. "It is high time for bed," he returned curtly. "It is nearly two."

"As you will," Arden said quietly.

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He watched his prisoner stalk past him. He waited till Wade had reached the door that led to the dressing-room. He spoke sharply.

“Captain Wade!”

Wade turned.

“Your conduct to-night was logical—we expected it, but that of last night is still unexplained.”

“The company, Dr. Arden, employs many agents, and some it does not know,” said the prisoner, bowing. “Good-night.” With that he disappeared.

CHAPTER XII

THE CAPTAIN USES DIPLOMACY

ARDEN had chosen the right time to present to Heberton Wade the cavalryman and metaphysician. The appearance of the distinguished-looking German at a moment when he believed that a common robbery was being committed made clear to the prisoner that he was in the hands of no ordinary gang. The company was cosmopolitan. Whatever its crimes, it was not petty. Pettiness is in itself a sin. Whatever its purposes, it was bold, and Wade was too much a man not to respect courage, however it showed itself. Sitting in friendly converse with the master-thief, under the power of his eyes, listening to his rich voice with its hundred lights and shades, and to the learning that seemed to grasp all time and place, he had more than once admitted the justice of the cause and expressed the hope of victory for it. But at other times, when alone, as he sat helpless and weary through the monotonous hours, pondering over what he had heard and seen, doubt returned, then disbelief and self-condemnation for

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his own credulity. Incontrovertible as was the Doctor's argument, it was absurd, and such a theory could find no serious consideration except in the brain of a mad idealist. As a cloak for crime it was superb. And about Arden and his colleagues there was no sign of insanity. He admitted readily that man for man his captor towered over him head and shoulders. Of the sturdy Francis, always suave and half-cringing yet masterful, of Albert, the picture of physical grace, he had as yet no true judgment. They were puzzles to him. In the menial posts they filled in his household they played their parts admirably, but it was acting. Did he try to override them, he met that same calm strength, that same quick wit that marked their chief. The powerful, morose Hawkins was more human, and his simple act in rescuing the sufferer from the storm almost renewed the Captain's faith in his high motives. So Wade had wavered. Then came the revelation of the fraud and the realization of its purport to him. A means such as this could have no end to justify it. They might prate now of their world-wide philanthropy, but only a fool would believe them. The scheme was ingenious, the schemers showed rare insight into human nature and the ways of the polite world, but they were, indeed, no better than the footpad who waylaid you on the street, or the thief who entered

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your second-story window. Worse, they had intelligence and education, and were far more dangerous than were ruffians. They were criminals, and as criminals he would treat them, he said to himself. No justice could condemn him if he broke his parole and thwarted a gang such as this. The mystery that had fascinated him was swept away, and simple, ugly facts confronted him and called for action. That was his thought as he stood defiantly facing Arden.

Responding to the master's quiet call, the German had come. With him came the mystery again. The polo-playing astronomer from England, the surpliced Nimrod and sonneteer from the Pacific, the learned Orientalist, had seemed at times a pretty fiction of the Doctor's, all in keeping with the grotesque plot and the fantastic story of the company. But here was a soldier; he was a gentleman; he might even be a noble. The scars that seared his face marked him a man of education, of Heidelberg or Göttingen. He stood a silent witness to the truth of Arden's claims that there was a company, that its members were picked men of every nation, men of high standing and wide learning, to accuse whom of crime for paltry profit were absurd. Against such as these, who had sprung from the very air to enmesh him, he felt for the moment helpless, so had surrendered.

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Turning from Arden with that mocking bow he had gone into his bedroom, thrown himself in a chair, and for a long time sat there, in the darkness, in the quiet of the night, reviewing step by step the days just past, and seeking his course for those to come. The spell of the company was over him once more. It might be wrong, but it was so new, so revolutionary, so bold, that it fascinated him. What were these men? Were they clever criminals or mad dreamers? Again and again he asked himself that question. For dreamers they were curiously sane. Keen wit showed in their every action. Beneath the monstrous joke they were perpetrating on the town there was a grim, good-humored laugh. Might they not indeed be men who had awakened before the dawn and were moving sure-footed through the darkness, while their fellows lay in sodden sleep? But Wade was one of those caught dreaming. He had to measure their acts by this single act in which he was involved, and considering its consequences to himself, he had no care for humanity to come. That act was a crime. The beautiful fabric which Arden talked of so fluently must soon be wrecked, and idealist or common robber, he would look upon the débris of it from a prison or a madhouse.

Whatever the company and its purpose, but one course lay clear for Wade. He was hopelessly

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in the toils. These men were humane. Where he was courteous he had received every courtesy, and when he had fought they had met him with a force overpowering but always gentle. They had trusted him. At the moment when they could have crushed him they had calmly rested their own safety on his word, and to violate that word to escape the consequences of their acts, however grave to him, would be contemptible. On that point his mind was clear. He must go on passive but protesting till the day came when he was free. Then they would be gone. But he would warn the world against them, he would make restitution to those who had lost through his part in the fraud, and do what he could to bring the perpetrators to justice. With this decision made he was able to sleep soundly, and in the morning he saw no reason to change.

The company's mysterious agent, of whom Wade had spoken to Arden, played no part in this resolve. He wanted to be right, and he knew that the heart is terribly unscrupulous. So he had put all thought of Amy Arden aside until he had definitely laid his course. That done she came back to him whether he would or no, for he had never seen so bewitching a woman. Recalling her as she had stood below him fixing her hair and biting so distractingly upon the bonnet pin, he sat after breakfast contentedly smoking and smiling over the

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lovely image of his fancy. We must remember that he was possessed of a fool! This is the only way we can account for half the love we know. We see men pass by a score of charming women and then suddenly go mad over one who, to all our study, reveals only an ancestry, a rich complexion, a little money, or a bit of wit, and sometimes not even that. And, to be fair, the same is true in the reverse. Ask yourself what Jill can see in Jack that suddenly she will leave the sure comforts of her home, to follow him with dog-like faithfulness through all the rough ways of this life. You cannot answer. Jill can. She will tell you how handsome that homely man is, how good the rascal, how clever the dullard. As he drones away on stocks and bonds and rents, she sits at his feet and hangs on his every word, rejoicing that God has sent this master-mind to enrich her. To account for many marriages we must believe in predestination, and at times we even suspect that the names were drawn from a hat. Considering this, Wade's conduct was not strange. Had I not known Georgianna I should have fallen in love at first sight with a woman so fair as Amy Arden, and that Wade had known Georgianna and had not loved her made all the more logical this sudden infatuation. So idly smoking away the morning, he gave himself up to thoughts of her. Was her one appearance

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just a flash of light across his darkness? He feared that. The company could not stay forever with him. Its purpose accomplished, it must disappear. Arden had said that it would strike again, but that might not be for years, and when he heard of its newest crime, again it would be gone. The girl's mystery added to her fascination. To win her would be a game worth playing. It would not be a contest won by flowers and dances and small talk, but a battle with brains which he believed as keen as any in the world, for seeking her he must run down Arden and his men. He would fight his way through the darkness till he came to the light. He vowed that as he strode up and down the room, now frowning when he considered the odds against him, now smiling as he thought of the reward of victory.

The Doctor entered in one of the smiling moments, and regarded the prisoner curiously.

"You are as illogical as ever this morning, I see, Captain," he said pleasantly.

"You don't seem satisfied unless I am making trouble for you," was the calm retort.

"It worries me to see you so complacent," Arden said, more gravely. "Of course we do not fear anything serious from you, but you do not seem to realize what may be impending for you."

"I see it well enough," Wade returned. "You

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will disappear one day with the valuable presents sent to Lady Victoria Glyme, and it will be left to me to explain. What I have to tell will be so incredible to this matter-of-fact and gullible world that hardly more than a handful of my friends will believe me. The rest will suspect me of fraud or insanity. It is not a pleasant prospect, Dr. Arden."

"Then why do you smile?" asked the other.

"There is something so absurd about the whole affair," was the answer. "I have a sense of humor which the grotesqueness of your crime appeals to, even though I shall have a heavy price to pay in the end. And, after all, why should I worry? I shall follow your advice, I shall stand up and tell what is true and do what is right and let the mob jeer."

"Well said," Arden exclaimed. "The company, Captain, at least respects your honesty, though not your brains."

"And I," said Wade calmly, "have respect for the company's brains but only contempt for its morals. I have been thinking a good deal about you, Dr. Arden, and the only conclusion I can reach concerning you and your friends is that you are infernally clever and are after money. All this talk about the blindness of humanity and the worthlessness of property, I throw aside as rubbish."

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"Naturally," Arden laughed. "So does all the rest of the world. But there was a time when the wise men thought that the earth was flat."

"I won't argue," snapped Wade. "You are after property, money, whatever you choose to call it. What you will do with it does not concern me. In the end it must come out of my pocket. Suppose, then, that I sit down now and draw one hundred thousand dollars to your account, in lieu of the plunder you are gathering, and agree to hold my peace concerning this deal, will you release me and leave this house?"

Dr. Arden walked to the window.

"Come here, Captain Wade," he said, and when his prisoner was beside him, he pointed to the street below where Hawkins was at work. "You see that man shovelling the snow from the sidewalk, the one who last night surprised you by an act of simple humanity—that, Captain, is the rector of one of the largest parishes in this country. It was he who saved me in the Indian jungle; it is he who writes the admirable sonnets. You thought him a heavy brute till you saw his heart. Perhaps you will yet see his mind. But would that man stoop to so menial a task for his share, a tenth or a twentieth of the paltry sum this robbery will yield?"

"Why not?" Wade answered coldly. "You for-

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get, Doctor, that I only see him shovelling snow and have no proof that he is a clergyman. That side certainly does not show much."

Arden made a gesture of impatience. "You are like all the rest—blind," he said. "You place a high value on your useless rubbish and judge us by your own idiocy. I had no right to expect more of you. But, Captain Wade, we refuse your offer of money. To accept it would bring this operation to the level of a mere hold-up, and were that our purpose we should have long ago had every cent you own. Believe me or not—the company has a great purpose, and when it issues its report on this crime it would look absurd for it to admit that it was bought off—bribed. But when the world reads how easy it is for intelligent men to relieve it of its precious baubles, when it sees how men of brains unhampered by morals can commit crime with safety, when it realizes that at the bottom of all crime is the false value it places on rubbish, then it will stop and think. This one lesson will hardly be more than a finger prick to dreaming humanity. But wait, Captain—the company will work on. When the crown jewels of England, gaudy stones that would not nourish a fly, when they disappear to be picked up in Broadway, when the Venus de Milo leaves the Louvre to rise in a night on Trafalgar Square, when China pays ten million pounds

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for the ransom of her emperor, than the dreamer will sit up and begin to blink at the light. The company will be at the awakening. It will show that there is enough and to spare in this world for every one of all that is worth having, if we only give things their proper value."

"I swear, Doctor, when you talk that way, apparently so sincerely, I am half of the mind that you are not a thief, but a socialist gone crazy—a dreamer," Wade declared.

"A dreamer, Captain, would not risk his life and honor in an operation like this," Arden returned. "Surely it demands men of action, and as for being a socialist, I do not think we have one such crank in the company. Socialism offers a medicine for the sick body of humanity. It would drug the race. The company, sir, would build up the race naturally to be strong and beautiful. It would teach men to think correctly, to know the things in this life that are really good and to strive for them. Socialism would reduce all to a common level. But you cannot keep brains down. We seek to control the brains and make them work right. Then when the world's leaders disdain the foolish baubles, when they no longer covet one another's gold-headed canes and trumpery jewels and useless houses and furniture, then at every dinner the wit will flow more freely than the wine, and every club

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will rival that charming circle of which Socrates was the centre. If men were only wise they would toss what they fight for now to the poor and the ignorant as a solace for their living and a business for their minds, as we give a rattle to a child or a ball to a dog."

"A dream—a foolish dream," Wade cried.

"A foolish dream?" Arden laughed softly. "A while ago it did seem to me that I was dreaming, but it was not as I contemplated the day that will come as surely as you and I stand here now. It was when I was downstairs examining some of the splendid evidences of the good-will of your friends and some of the strong demands for your friendship that have been coming in all morning addressed to Lady Victoria. It was a perfect nightmare to me. The Nevada miner, as I expected, has sent a tiara worth thousands, all glittering with diamonds, vulgar, ostentatious stones that can only hide the beauty of a really queenly head. We are threatened with a piano by Mrs. Garish, a gorgeous instrument from which can issue not one note half so sweet as the wind makes in a pine tree. The Cowleses have sent spoons, a whole chest of spoons of all sizes and shapes, as if Lady Victoria had as many mouths as an oyster. There is a chair from Mrs. Garrick that must have cost hundreds, for some poor Chinese fool carved

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half his days on it, yet to sit in it gives you a back-ache. I opened a dozen bundles, hoping to find there a quip that would bring a healthy laugh, a thought that was worth the thinking, a fact that was worth remembering, for something that would add to your real pleasure in life—but out came salt-cellar, asparagus forks, salad forks, vases, clocks to tick off wasted time, and dishes enough for an army to feed from. To-day these things are well enough. It is the best poor ignorant humanity can do to please Lady Victoria and her kind. Each gift there is a touching symbol of the childishness of man. Do I dream because I hope for a better day? Am I mad because I risk all that you and your kind hold dear in a struggle to hasten that time?"

Wade did not answer. Arden had spoken quietly and simply, without launching into heroics. In his voice and gesture there was no trace of the actor. He seemed a strong, keen man talking common sense and absolutely sincere in all he said. It was difficult not to believe in him, for his logic was faultless. Down in his heart the Captain admitted that. He saw that to combat it he had only the deep-rooted prejudices of centuries and that in arguing against it he must be like one of the wise men who contended so long that the earth was flat. A flat earth seemed safer to those sages, and so to,

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him the Doctor's theory was full of danger. Then he knew that alone again, out of that magnetic presence, the sophistry of it all would be clear to him and that he would laugh at the credulity of the moment.

"Can't you comprehend the company now?" demanded Arden after a strained silence.

"My comprehension does not carry me beyond the robbery that is being committed in my house under my very nose," Wade answered sharply. "Come, Doctor, let us be sensible. You must consider my position. It is not conducive to high and mighty thoughts for the future of the world. It keeps me more occupied with my own troubles. For six days now I have been a prisoner in these three rooms, and the prospect for weeks more of this life is gloomy. The loneliness of it begins to pall. There are occasions when you entertain me with your wild philosophy, but most of the time I have nothing to do but sit and smoke and think. Breakfast alone—lunch alone—dine alone—day after day. Do you wonder that I cannot regard your company in an entirely friendly light?"

"But your situation is not half so bad as your man Harris's in the trunkroom," retorted Arden. "We have had to double his pay to keep him contented."

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"I don't get any pay," snapped the prisoner as he stretched himself out on a divan to study the ceiling for a long time while his jailer sat by the fire smoking in silence. He cared little now for the ethics of the company. He had formed a purpose that would not be changed by his ever-shifting opinions of the master and his men. Saints or criminals, their morals no longer concerned him. He had seen Amy Arden and he believed her all that was good in woman. He had seen her in the light and shade in that half-minute, had seen her smile and then grow grave, had heard her voice. Of course he was not really in love, he said to himself. He was no fool to lose his head over a woman to whom he had not even spoken. His case was simply one of interest at first sight. A light that flashed so full and clear across his darkness seemed to promise to brighten life forever could he but reach it.

How reach it? The answer to that question was what he sought as he studied the ceiling. He had to be very wary. He had worked out a plan, but it was so simple that he feared that the father would understand it at once and wreck his hopes. Still, it was all that the moment offered, and he made up his mind to await patiently an opportunity to broach it. This came sooner than he expected, for Dr. Arden was a little troubled by the sullen-

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ness of his prisoner, and set about to placate him. He believed that his rejection of the proposal to settle the operation with a payment of a large sum of money was the cause of Wade's moroseness; he realized that the Captain's situation more than justified his anger, and he wanted to show him that while the company's refusal to release him was absolute, it bore him no petty ill will, and had no wish to trouble him needlessly.

"You had better take a good long walk to-night, Captain," he said pleasantly, seeing that the man on the divan had no disposition to reopen their discussion.

There was no answer. He gazed at the Captain, and the Captain gazed at the ceiling in an absorbed contemplation of its blankness.

"Is the food not satisfactory?" he asked, in a louder voice but still in good humor.

"Oh, perfectly!" Wade answered wearily. "Andre is an excellent cook, but the food does not make all of a dinner. A good dinner must be prepared for, looked forward to, dressed for, gone downstairs to, and afterward lingered over, with coffee and liqueurs and cigars. Dining up here alone is like a meal in a hospital. I tell you what——" The Captain sat up and spoke cheerfully, as if delighted with a sudden thought that had come to him. "Why can't you and I dine down-

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stairs together every evening—that would break the day a bit?”

“A good suggestion,” said Arden pleasantly. “Perfectly feasible, only some nights, you see, I have my daughter with me. She is in town only for a few weeks and——”

“Oh!” Wade exclaimed ruefully. “I did not know that. You did say something the other day about Miss Arden, but I was not aware that she honored the house with frequent visits. I hope I may have the pleasure of meeting her. Knowing her father, I feel sure that I shall find her charming. A little dinner for the three of us to-night would be most pleasant—for me anyway.”

“I should like to have you know my daughter, Captain,” the Doctor answered so solemnly that Wade was wondering how this man, usually so quick-witted, had become suddenly so obtuse. “In spite of some sharp words that have passed between us, I have a high regard for you and have no objection to having her meet you. I have brought her up in the conventional way. The company allows no women in its work. I have a horror of a woman who is in advance of the times, for she never gets far enough in advance to be great, but just enough to be foolish. Indeed, the women who are a little behind the times are the most charming. So Amy knows nothing of my work, but is accus-

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tomed to men of your calibre and would not see anything unusual about you. Still there is an obstacle in the way of having her dine with us."

"I did not wish to intrude," said Wade apologetically.

"It would not be an intrusion at all," Arden returned kindly. "It would be a pleasure to both of us. The company, indeed, would gratify your every wish. But you see, Captain, my daughter believes that you are ill in bed recovering from an operation for appendicitis."

"I was operated on last Tuesday, I believe," laughed Wade.

"And will not be able to sit up in bed till Wednesday at the earliest," said Arden.

"It seems to me that by a rapid recovery I might be able to be helped downstairs to-morrow evening by the men and sat up in an arm-chair at the table," the Captain suggested. "I don't suppose that Miss Arden is very well versed in appendicitis cases."

"If I told her that you were entirely well, she would believe it," Arden replied. The plan seemed to appeal to his sense of humor, and he was smiling softly as he spoke. "We might, indeed, have a quiet little dinner to-morrow evening. Is there any one else you would like to ask—say, Jim Rollins or——"

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"We can get along without Jim," Wade answered carelessly. "We shall have him another time. You will be surprised when you see how well I can act the convalescent."

"It is simply to see you act that I consent to letting you come downstairs," said Arden dryly. "By the way, you have a billiard-room upstairs. What do you say to a game? The company is not busy to-day—it has only to take in presents at the door—and we do want to amuse you."

"A good scheme," cried Wade heartily, springing to his feet. "Do you play at all well? You see I have won the championship at the Wanderers three years running. Perhaps you would like to put a little on it?"

"I am opposed to gambling on moral grounds," the Doctor replied. "It is simply a means of gaining useless property without working for it. But if it will amuse you I will play you for a dollar a point or any sum you may wish."

CHAPTER XIII

A QUIET DINNER OF THREE

SPEAKING of Georgianna I said that Wade could have told you the color of her hair, her eyes, her cheeks, whether her nose was straight, aquiline, or pug, or was her brow high or low. Of her I said that I could have told you no more than of the light that plays among the leaves to delight my eye, or of the breeze that stirs them to make for me the sweetest music. Now I met Georgianna many years before ever I heard even the name of Amy Arden, and yet I think did I set myself to the task I could describe the Doctor's daughter, giving the petty details with accuracy. The day I saw her first I studied her closely. I marked the straight, delicate nose with just a piquant tilt; the fine blue eyes that met mine, so frank, so quiet, yet deep as the sea and like the sea in their power for storm and calm; the white, rounded cheeks where the dimples played among the roses; the glory of wavy golden hair that crowned a broad, white forehead; the neck that Phidias might have carved from ivory-tinted marble, swelling into shoulders,

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strong, yet exquisite in their moulding; a figure tall and sinuous, with a waist such as Venus would have had, had that goddess been blessed with a modern modiste. Telling you that but brings to your mind any woman who is fair and beautiful.

Few pens can portray beauty as does the brush. We turn to Balzac, that master in the art of drawing woman. We read page after page wherein is described in wonderful detail every feature of *Félicité de Touches*. The pupils of her eyes, the nostrils, the adorable upper lip, lightly shaded by a charming down, the very line of the thighs are pictured for us marvellously. Yet when we try to take the features and make the form we have a Chinese puzzle, and find ourselves contented with a Cleopatra. From her we go to our own Prue, of Washington Square. "For my part I do not believe that any man can see softer skies than I see in Prue's eyes; nor hear sweeter music than I hear in Prue's voice; nor find a more heaven-lighted temple than I know Prue's mind to be." The simple bookkeeper's wife was probably plain. He makes her beautiful, for, like him, every man has his lovely image of peace and contentment, "not the plain of Sharon, nor the valley of Enna, nor Arcadia, nor Claude's pictures," but that one which, indeed, makes his very heart smile within him. So I think of Georgianna, now in the library,

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my lovely image of peace and contentment, now on the road, galloping, galloping, as crisp as the October wind, as bright as the sun at noon, the image of life, of happiness, and goodness. You would not see her any clearer did I tell you that, like Beatrix, she had a skin as delicate as the satiny lining of an egg, or that the circle of her eyes was of the purest mother-of-pearl. So, I fancy, did Wade think of Amy Arden. He never marked her fine upper lip, the temples that cast back the light, or the delicate curve of her nostrils, as he studied her covertly across the table that evening when he first met her. Hers was the sweetness of a summer day when now the sunshine floods the land and every sense is keyed to gladness, when now the clouds creep softly over the valley, bringing restful brooding shadows; hers was the radiance of the golden-rod, that rises so tall and strong and fair when autumn is swinging death's scythe over hill and meadow. Thus he saw her. Before him was his image of peace and contentment. With her life would be a long, sweet ramble through the Happy Valley; without her he must go stumbling wearily on over the arid plain.

Every man is a poet some time, but his muse need not express itself to all the world in rhyme and rhythm. He writes a thousand odes and sonnets on the air that only he can read and under-

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stand. Wade was a poet now. For three days he had been scribbling his wordless verses in his mind. He had composed them half laughingly, for it seemed absurd that a mere vision could so fill his hours. But when he was face to face with his inspiration, when he had held her hand one second and had addressed to her a few commonplace remarks, his interest at first sight turned to love. The strong, cold man was felled by the blow of a woman's eyes. It is strange how easily the weaker sex grovels before the fair! But it has been so since they met in Eden. To what perfect being Adam would have grown had he not seen Eve that fatal day when she went wandering through the garden unchaperoned! There would hardly be so many of us now, but that one faultless creature would have been worthy of this fair earth. Picture him ever strong and calm and self-contained, knowing neither fear nor vanity nor ambition nor greed, always saying the right thing, always considerate of others, never unkind nor peevish nor petty, going his own quiet way. What a hero for a romance he would have made, that Adam that might have been! But in the contemplation of the splendid possibility, I am wandering from the story; in the recalling of that first flirtation I am forgetting the many millionth.

Amy Arden greeted Wade in the dining-room,

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as he entered with feeble steps, supported by Francis and Albert. When he saw her a smile flitted over his ruddy face, and Arden stepped forward quickly and formally presented him to his daughter. The Captain took his hand from the butler's shoulder and firmly grasped the little white one she held out.

"Miss Arden," he said, "it is good of you to come and dine with a lonely invalid. You make appendicitis a luxury."

"I fear I am but a poor substitute for Lady Victoria Glyme," she returned sweetly. "How you must long——"

"For goodness sake, let us forget Lady Victoria for a while," cried he with sudden energy.

The Doctor, standing behind his daughter, frowned and shook his head in warning to the prisoner.

"Forget?" exclaimed the girl, puzzled by this outburst.

"Pardon me," the Captain said meekly, "but you see it pains me to think of her so far away when I need her so much—so I try to forget her."

"Ah!" Amy was all sympathy now. "But come—we must not keep you standing there. We must remember that you are an invalid."

A woman's face is loveliest in the shadow, when you know that behind the clouds the sun shines.

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Wade laughed gayly. The sun broke through the clouds, and running to the head of the table the girl pulled out the great arm-chair there.

"Father and I fixed it for you, so you would be comfortable," she said.

Wade sank into it like one exhausted by a great physical effort, and leaning back smiled his gratitude.

"Are you sure that you can stand this strain?" Arden asked with solicitude.

"I could sit this way forever," Wade replied firmly.

"Without Lady Victoria?" said Amy in chiding.

"Won't you let me forget her just this one evening?" he pleaded gently. Then he turned to the father. "Dr. Arden," he said quietly, "will you ask the blessing?"

This effort really did exhaust the Captain. He could not have added one word more than that then. He dared not meet the eyes of the master-thief, but fixed his solemn gaze upon the flowers in the centre of the table. A moment of silence followed. The rich voice broke upon his ear, soft, but resonant and clear as Arden acknowledged their dependence. Surprised, Wade looked to the left, to see the Doctor's head bowed as he made his invocation; to the right at the girl, now in attitude of devotion; at the side, where the servants stood

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reverently. A mocker he was. He felt that, and humbly joined them. Arden used no trite, pompous phrases; he spoke simply and fervently, acknowledging their gratitude for life's necessities, and closing with a prayer for the quick coming of that day when all mankind would have right understanding.

So naturally was this done, so sincerely, that there was no smile behind Wade's mask as he sat erect in his chair, forgetting his part in the comedy, and studying his captor's impassive face. The mystery of the company deepened. The act of the brutal Hawkins in rescuing the sufferer from the storm had seemed incongruous and puzzling, but this sudden revelation of the Doctor's piety amazed him. The sharp arrow that he had fired missed its mark, and it had not been dodged, but faced without flinching. To his mocking request Arden had responded readily, as though well accustomed to such preprandial service. What was this man? Wade thought he had put away that question from his mind, unanswered, and not to be asked again. Now it came back with redoubled persistency. A clever actor, he said, beside whom Count Cagliostro were a tyro in fraud. One who could cloak his crimes in philanthropy would find piety a useful garb. Had they been alone he would have assailed him for his irreverence and hypocrisy, but he remembered the daughter and turning to her and see-

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ing her so fair and good, he could not doubt her, and his trust in her aroused misgivings again as to the justice of condemning the father. He had to fall back on the old enigma and rest content that the future would explain it.

The brief, simple prayer seemed to lift Wade's companions above the realities of the moment, and to call their thoughts to better things than dining. There was a meditative silence. Amy Arden spoke first.

"Surely, Captain Wade," she said with concern, "you are not going to eat those oysters?"

They were on earth again, living!

"Surely I am," the host answered, astonished by this sudden interference with his diet.

"My daughter is right," the Doctor said, signing to the butler to remove the dish which he had just placed before the Captain. "They would be sure death to a man in your condition."

"In my condition?" exclaimed Wade.

"In appendicitis cases we have to keep the patient on the softest foods for several weeks," replied Arden. "You forget."

Wade laughed. "I see," he returned. "But, Dr. Arden, there is one thing of which you will surely not deprive me. Francis, the cocktails."

"You are an astonishing invalid," cried Amy.

"The most amazing patient I ever had," declared

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her father grimly. "A cocktail, Captain Wade, would kill you."

"Well, perhaps you will have one yourself then?" Wade said.

"I seldom take them," answered Arden. "As it is, mere food dulls the edges of our intellect too much and I do not care to blunt them more with poisonous liquors."

"But you have joined me before in a cocktail, with considerable relish I thought," protested the host.

"That was before you were ill, if you remember," retorted the Doctor. "I do join my friends in a drink at times, but it is just as we all enter into conversations that are dull and profitless—to be polite. Very often I have talked volubly with men, knowing well enough we should both be passing the time to better advantage did we sit silent and think. I do take a glass of Burgundy or Madeira with my dinner generally, not on my own account at all, but, like St. Paul, for the stomach's sake."

"Your father, Miss Arden, is the most extraordinary man I ever met," exclaimed Wade.

"You are learning him," the girl said.

"No—not learning him—studying," the Captain replied. "I am like a boy trying to solve an equation in algebra, getting X as a result, and having not the slightest conception of what it means."

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"But Father is as simple as arithmetic," Amy declared with great emphasis.

"Then I do not know arithmetic," laughed Wade.

"You are right there," Arden put in pleasantly. "Life's problem is like an equation in algebra, Captain Wade. It is full of unknown quantities, but wise men are working on it and in time will reduce the equation to simple figures that all can understand."

"Well, all good men must pray for a speedy solution," said Wade. Albert placed before him a full glass. He eyed it quizzically a moment, then raised it with ceremony. "I am sorry that my condition reduces me to drinking, in a beverage so healthful but insipid as milk, a toast to one who has come to cheer my lonely hours. But it is none the less sincere. I hope, Miss Arden, that we shall have you with us often."

"It is kind of you, Captain Wade," Amy said, acknowledging the toast. "I do want to see as much as I can of my father for the few weeks he will be here. We are seldom together—he skips around the world so much, and when I heard that he would be in New York for three weeks, I simply flew from Paris, abandoning my chaperon there, and bringing only a maid. We know no one here, and a hotel is very lonely. Some nights I do get

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Father for the theatre, but he is always afraid to leave you alone."

"Dr. Arden," said Wade earnestly, turning to his captor, "do not let your solicitude for me interfere with Miss Arden's pleasure. I give you my word that I shall stick to my room and do nothing rash. My box at the opera is always at your disposal, and I shall give orders that my automobile is at Miss Arden's call at any time."

"Thank you—you are extremely kind," said Arden heartily. "By the way, your chauffeur is an old employee of mine."

Wade started. "Jacques a man of yours?" he exclaimed.

"A mere coincidence," was the careless reply. "I had him for a while in Vienna." The Doctor raised his glass. "Amy," he said, smiling, "there is a toast you and I should drink—to a kind host and an honorable gentleman. Captain Wade, may you have a long life and all things good, and may that day come quickly when you will understand the unknown quantity X."

As Amy Arden drank the Captain's health she regarded him bewitchingly. Before her glance all thoughts of the company disappeared. This was the one for whom he had waited long years. He had seen her smile that way at him a thousand times from the cloudland. And from that very

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cloudland she had come at last. He looked into the eyes that had so often watched him from the shadows. The hand that had reached out to him in fancy now held the glass that pledged him. No longer an imagery of his idle hours, but a real woman, radiant and lovely, she sat at his side. He stood at the border of the Happy Valley. This moment was worth the dreary trudge across the desert, and that he must turn back into the arid waste he had no fear. One so sweet as she, and good, would not come out of the air to mock him. So his heart smiled. He became a host, indeed. He forgot that he was a prisoner, he forgot the wrong that the man at his side had done him, and remembered only that he was entertaining a charming woman at his table.

"Dr. Arden," he said graciously, "I shall trouble no longer about the unknown quantity in your personal equation anyway." He turned to the daughter. "You see, Miss Arden, your father has been a puzzle to me. He is so many-sided. In fact, I never met so wonderful a man. Yesterday, for instance, he took me from a deep discussion of sociology to the billiard-room and won three hundred and seventy-five dollars from me."

"You dream, Captain Wade," cried the Doctor. "Yesterday you were flat on your back in bed. You are thinking of the game we had a week ago."

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"Surely — surely," returned Wade quickly. "Time passes so fast when one is ill, and then my head is a little wrong at times—the after-effect of ether, I suppose. It was a week ago, Miss Arden. Your father ran fifty-six before I got started, and——"

"But Father never gambles," interrupted Amy, with a glance across the table that could be nothing but a demand for an explanation.

"Quite right, my dear," said Arden, almost with meekness. "But, you see, Captain Wade always plays for money, and I did not want to spoil his game, so what could I do?"

"Did you tell him how well you stood in the master's tournament at Vienna three years ago?" asked the girl reprovingly.

"I did not," was the answer, given testily. "He would have thought that I was boasting. As it is, he must believe me a vainglorious fellow."

"By no means," said Wade. "But I should like to know how it came about that you failed to win the tournament."

"Let us discuss this shad," responded the Doctor adroitly. "It was the first in the market this season, and Andre got it for you, forgetting your condition. I am sorry that you cannot enjoy it, but must keep to milk toast."

The butler placed a bowl before Wade. He

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contemplated the sickly dish half angrily, then turned a longing gaze to the Doctor's plate.

"That shad looks excellent," he said in a voice of pathos.

"It is excellent," returned Arden heartily. "But it would be the death of you. However, I shall allow you a solace in a single glass of this fine old Madeira."

"You are very kind," cried the Captain effusively.

When his glass had been filled, Amy raised hers. "We three must join in drinking to Lady Victoria," she said, with charming seriousness. "I do not believe that she is out of your mind a minute, Captain Wade. So a safe journey to her and a long life of happiness at its end!"

The host drank solemnly. "I fear, Miss Arden, that I do not half appreciate my great good fortune in winning Victoria," he said. "There are times when it all seems like a dream. You see, it has been very long since I saw her."

"But she will soon be here," said the girl brightly. "Let us see—when is the wedding? I really know nothing except what I read in the papers."

"When is the wedding, Doctor?" asked Wade, turning to Arden.

"The eighteenth, I think, was the date you

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set," replied Arden, with gravity. "It is on the cards anyway, so I suppose you must have it then."

"You observe, Miss Arden, how your father is settling my affairs for me," laughed the Captain. "He really knows more about my wedding than I do, and has made absolutely all the arrangements. There is nothing——"

"You are forgetting your milk toast," interrupted the Doctor pleasantly. "I insist on your taking some nourishment."

The warning was heeded. Wade did not again approach the danger line for the mere purpose of worrying his captor. He sought rather to join him in avoiding a subject so fraught with trouble for them both. But, woman-like, the girl reverted to the approaching wedding. She wanted to know all about Lady Victoria, her age, was she fair or dark, would they live in America, or settle abroad. Some of these questions Wade parried adroitly. To answer others he had recourse to his imagination, and once even let his humor carry him so far as to recall his impressions of the lovely English woman when he first saw her that day in the Paris-Marseilles train. His spirits rose as the comedy proceeded, and he did not weigh the consequences of his pretty fiction. At such times Arden encouraged him. It was Amy herself that checked his ex-

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travagant praise of his fiancée. Woman-like, she wearied of it. She found her host more interesting when he forgot this other than when he remembered her, and so she led him far afield. Wade had never met such a charming pair as the Doctor and his daughter, and while at times his own ignorance of life pressed him into silence, at others he was astonished at the quickness of his wit. Arden was delightful. He put aside for the time his philosophy, which though charged with optimism, could not but call their minds from the light to the darkness it sought to dispel. He regaled them with treasures from the vast store of his experience. Kings, nobles, statesmen, scholars, the man who swept the street, drove the cart, or sat wearily on the high stool before the ledger were but puppets to a humor such as his. He stripped them of their trappings and judged them as he would a horse. He showed himself a raconteur with a rare command of dialect, whether the high-pitched drawl of the negro, the pigeon English of the Chinaman, or the rollicking brogue. He was never reminded of a story. It came naturally as a part of his experience and flowed in with the purpose of the conversation, and added to its force. He listened well, which, after all, is an art subtler than talking. But the listening was repaid. His daughter was not learned, but her very ignorance was

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charming, it was so womanly, and if she could not see why two and two made four, so much keener had the argument to be. Then Wade had one or two good stories, in which practice had made him perfect. Fortunately they were new to the others, and he told them with rare finish. By the time dessert was reached, for the guests an ice but for the host a simple custard, the three seemed boon companions. The company and its crime, humanity and its errors, Lady Victoria and the wedding were forgotten.

"We shall have our coffee and cigars in the library," said Wade, rising, when all too quickly the dinner reached its end. "Miss Arden, you will, of course, join us there. Francis, your arm for a lift upstairs."

By the fire the three continued their discussion in a vein more serious, under the influence of the softer light and the comfort of the deep chairs. Soon a question of his daughter's brought Arden back to his beloved theory, though, of course, he avoided all reference to the methods by which he was impressing it on the world.

"There has always been discontent and always will be among those who see others having more than themselves of what they deem of value," he said. "The discontented ones get their standard of values from those who by education have at-

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tained a plane above them. When the ignorant and poor see the so-called educated and well-to-do not accumulating knowledge but accumulating rubbish, they demand their share. The great problem of political economy is not how to distribute food, clothing, and shelter fairly—the mass of the people have that. It is how to distribute the unnecessities. That is difficult, indeed, if we cling to such toys with the persistence of children. Clear away the rubbish, and that part of the time the race spends in creating it will go to the production of the necessities and there will be enough for all.”

“Your old socialistic theory again,” Wade interposed with a sceptical smile.

“Nonsense,” replied the Doctor. “I do not want to whip the human child; I wish to teach him to think right. Legislation complicates. Socialism is legislation carried to extremes. It is force and you will always have discontent where there is force. Its present agitation offers a splendid opportunity to clever and unscrupulous men to use it as a means to accumulate rubbish for themselves, either in worldly goods or worldly power. That is a temporary danger—a ripple in the current. The conditions which we have to-day are perfectly natural and right. If you suddenly took from the ignorant and the so-called educated half their hours of labor, either manual or so-called mental, and did

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not give them toys with which to occupy their minds, they would soon be killed by either ennui or immorality. They must be educated to ease. There must be a readjustment of our ideas as to what is worth having, but it must come gradually. This is the only cure."

"How are you going to distribute the necessities more fairly except by legislation?" asked Wade sharply.

"The day will come," Arden answered, "when the educated man will discover that the suit that warms him is the one on his back, not the ten others in his wardrobe. He will learn that silk socks and gold-headed canes are not a source of happiness. He will see that the six persons in his family can occupy only six chairs at a time, and that carved legs do not rest the sitter's back. He will question the wisdom of drudging eight hours a day when four will give him good clothes, good food, and good shelter. With those extra hours he will have time to acquire knowledge. He will learn that if he knows something of botany, a half-mile of country road offers more pleasure than forty miles over which you shoot in an automobile. He will start his sluggish blood on the tennis court and golf links, and will clear his brain by a climb to the high mountain-top. He will become the wise animal that God intended him to be. Great fortunes

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will fade away, and with them the idle class. The smart set will be the wise set and will snub the ignorant, not because they are deficient in rubbish, but because they lack knowledge. Those who are socially ambitious will turn to mathematics, to astronomy, philosophy, and chemistry, instead of wasting years for money. Can't you see how one pebble will make the ripple that will disturb the whole human pond? The so-called lower classes seeing the so-called upper classes tossing aside their idols and being happy in their new possessions, will demand their share. Knowledge is as free as air. Its supply is inexhaustible. The demand for the useless trumpery will disappear, and the time spent in making it will be utilized in learning. The widespread of right knowledge will lead to the widespread of unselfishness and charity. Ambition will survive to give life a purpose, but it will be greed no longer."

"And what will become of commerce?" asked Wade, laughing at this dream, to him so wild.

"It will be reduced to common sense too," the Doctor replied. "The change will be gradual. The rubbish factories will close up with the millions of stores that dispense their absurd output. The myriads of men who made and handled the gew-gaws must either produce necessities or die. Necessities will become cheap. Trains will run on the

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railroads just the same, but they will haul only what we really need. Steamships will ply the seas, but there will be more room for travellers. A really smart man, one of your class in the present day, Captain Wade, will not be bothered with a servant and six trunks. He will have with him two small bags—one containing clothes and the other books.”

“Dr. Arden,” cried Wade vehemently, “your picture is absurd for this reason——”

He never gave that reason. It was doubtless but a repetition of those arguments with which from time to time he had sought so vainly to satisfy himself of the absurdity of Arden’s theory. He paused a moment to gather himself for the dispute, and in the silence a gentle knock sounded.

The Doctor looked at the Captain inquiringly, but his prisoner did not understand. The knock sounded again a little louder.

“There is some one at the door,” Arden said.

Wade recollected that for the evening he was host, the master of his own house, and cried, “Come in.”

The Baron entered.

It was the second time Wade had seen the German, and he remembered only that he was one of the company.

“Well?” he exclaimed angrily, rising.

Dr. Arden was up, too.

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The eyes of the soldier were on the fair head that to him appeared just above the back of the deep chair before the fire.

"Pardon my intrusion," he said, "but I wished to see Dr. Arden."

Hearing that voice the girl started, and, springing to her feet, faced him.

"Friedrich!" she cried.

"Amy!" exclaimed the Baron, and coming forward he seized her hand and bowed over it gallantly.

There was a rapid interchange of German between the two, which Wade did not understand. From them he glanced inquiringly at Arden to see on the face usually so calm a look of deep annoyance.

"Baron," the Doctor asked brusquely, "did you come to see me?"

Amy interrupted, "Captain Wade, do you know Baron von Kohlberg?"

"I have the pleasure," replied Wade, bowing stiffly, and clasping his hands behind his back.

"We met on a previous visit of mine," said von Kohlberg, in excellent English. "By the way, Doctor, as I came into the house the telephone bell was ringing very violently. The servant was coming up, but I told him not to mind—I should tell you that a Mr. Rollins——"

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"That fellow Rollins is a nuisance, Captain Wade," Arden exclaimed, as he left the room to answer the call.

Now had the prisoner followed his own inclinations, he would have forgotten his parole, fallen upon the German, and hurled him downstairs in the wake of his master. That the man was of the company did not trouble him. That the soldier and metaphysician was, after all, only a common robber who had entered his house by force did not anger him. It was that look of Amy Arden's that aroused his fury, her smile of welcome for the intruder, her familiar address, the rapid interchange of greetings in a language which he could not understand—these and the unmistakable light in the Baron's eye, that even his Teutonic stolidity could not hide. But, as always with these men, he was powerless. To the girl he was an invalid, a patient of her father's, and this newcomer was not only the Doctor's friend but hers also. He had to play his part.

"Baron von Kohlberg, take a chair," he said gruffly. "I am delighted to see you."

"My coming at this hour was rather unusual," returned the other politely, as he dropped into Arden's place by the fire. "I happened to be passing on my way from dining with a friend on Irving Place, and, remembering that I had a message for

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Dr. Arden, dropped in. Supposing, of course, you were in bed, still an invalid, I came upstairs unannounced, at the butler's suggestion. You are recovering quickly, Captain."

"Thanks to the excellent attention I have had," Wade growled.

Amy Arden noticed the change in her host's manner, but attributed it to his weariness, and forgave his coldness. It was unusual for a man to be sitting up this way within six days of so serious an operation, and the fatigue he had undergone in the long dinner would naturally lead to irritation at the appearance of a stranger. Excitement had upset him, she said to herself, and so sought to calm him.

"Baron von Kohlberg and I are old, old friends, Captain Wade," she explained in a soothing voice, giving him a smile that almost drove away his anger. "It was a great surprise to me to see him come in when I supposed that he was in Berlin with the Kaiser. I hope you will pardon me for exciting you by my behavior."

"Forgiven," he responded, now smiling himself. "You did excite me greatly—but then the least little thing nowadays gets on my nerves."

"Tell me, what has brought you to New York so suddenly?" said Amy, forgetting her host and turning to the Baron.

"Business," was the reply, gravely given.

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"Certain affairs connected with a large Spanish castle in which I am interested."

"Do you think it will be built?" asked Wade, with a meaning glance.

"Undoubtedly," was the quiet answer. "The work has been begun, but it may take centuries to complete it."

"A new treatise on metaphysics, Friedrich?" asked Amy.

"Beside it metaphysics is child's play," returned the Baron, rising, for his master reëntered.

"It was only Mr. Rollins, solicitous as ever about your health, Captain," the Doctor said, laughing. "That is twice to-day. I dine with him Tuesday night, and I think I shall bring him down to see you." Arden turned to his daughter. "Come, Amy, it is time I took you back to the Holland House, and you, Baron, won't you accompany us? I have something to say to you. Good-night, Captain Wade."

So they left him. Wade sat in his deep chair, motionless. He had crossed the arid desert. He stood on the edge of the Happy Valley. Before him rose the strong German, guarding the way. This man would fight with no brutal weapon. His was the power of birth, of fortune, of intellect. Wade sprang up. He stood erect—alone now in the arid desert, his gaze fixed on the Happy Valley. But he would not turn back!

CHAPTER XIV

WITH LAO-TZE AND KNOWLTON

THAT evening when I sat in the lounging-room of the Wanderers Club waiting for Dr. Arden, I was surprised to see Knowlton enter, look around as if in search of some one, then come over to my chair.

"I thought you would be out of town to-night, Billy," I said.

"I got back unexpectedly," he replied. "I dropped in here for dinner, thinking I might find you and Dr. Arden, of whom I have heard a good deal of late and am anxious to meet."

"Then join us," I returned, and, without waiting for his answer, called a servant and ordered the service for three.

I wanted to ask Knowlton what he knew of Dr. Arden, but such an inquiry was stopped by the arrival of that person. While I had not previously given him enough thought to form a clear picture of what he must be like, our pleasant conversations over the telephone, always lightened by his ready wit, led me to expect something other than a

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heavy, squarely built man of about forty years, who looked rather a merchant than a student and traveller. After the formal greeting that passed between the guest and Knowlton and myself, there was naturally some restraint, as is usual when strangers meet, but as we proceeded in the dinner he seemed a decidedly ordinary man. Then once or twice when he addressed himself to Knowlton I noticed a curious twitching of the mouth and a light in the eyes that promised better things than a very scientific explanation of Wade's case, and some commonplaces concerning Lady Victoria Glyme. Wade had sat up in bed for the first time that morning and was on the road to recovery. There my interest in the medical side of the case ceased, especially as I was asked by the surgeon to drop in that day a week to see my friend and make the last plans for the wedding. By plying my guest with questions I learned little more than I already had from my telephone conversations with him and my careful perusal of the papers. The eighteenth, at noon, one week from the following Saturday, was the date set. And the ceremony in the house would be so simple that Morton was perfectly competent to attend to all the arrangements. The Captain's rector had been notified, the caterer and the florist contracted with, and Arden had himself acknowledged for his patient and the

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absent bride the arrival of such few presents as had come. When I referred to Lady Victoria I found that the Doctor's acquaintance with her had been very slight, and beyond a few raptures regarding her beauty, her cleverness, and her popularity at court, I got little enlightenment. It was well that Knowlton was with us, I thought. As the conversation lagged he took up the burden of it and turned it into a new channel. Then he unveiled the Doctor's mind to me, changed the dull guest whom I was struggling so hard to entertain into a man of wide knowledge and astounding theories, drove the heaviness from the passive face, and brought to it the light of humor, of wisdom, of purpose. And I learned Billy Knowlton! For as he drew out the philosopher deftly, he revealed a side of his own character that was new to me and most surprising. He was no longer the idle man of money with an intellect that revelled in a stable, or the over-cheerful creature with an optimism born of personal comfort and dulled wits, or a common fellow like myself, content to live and move in a circle so tiny that a child might have drawn it for me. At that time I did not understand. At first it seemed a joke, a pose of his, and I was angry with him for deceiving my guest. I stared at the Doctor, his eyes all alight, now a gentle smile of cynicism playing around his mouth,

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now a hearty laugh at some human foible, now his face uplifted as he spoke like one dreaming, all this following a lucid explanation of the principles of jiu jitsu. I stared at Knowlton, the immaculate, careless, never known to have a thought beyond his clothes or horses, now hanging on every word of the guest, now interjecting sharp cuts at me and my kind, now talking of the future of humanity, as if he had one care for it. I was dreaming myself, I said. To-day I know better.

When Arden—so I speak of him, for so I addressed him that night—when he began to forget his dinner, the present, and to lose himself in the windings of his absurd philosophy, I followed him amused, smiling. I wondered that Knowlton was not laughing outright, and feared that any moment might bring an outburst from him that would insult the Doctor. But he listened with rapt attention. Then came a time when I saw that he was in earnest, that he believed, that he was concerned in some strange movement which had for its end the good of humanity.

“We are animals and some great purpose has lifted us above our fellows,” Arden said. “From apehood we move gradually but surely to real manhood. The goal is a long way off, but the light breaks around it. The Chinese philosopher Lao-

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Tze saw that light nearly twenty-five hundred years ago, and taught the way there. Good man after good man has repeated his words, and the world has gone blundering on, blind and unheeding. To-day we have enough wise animals on earth to act as well as preach. You recall the words of Lao-Tze, Mr. Knowlton?"

"At present I am devoting myself entirely to botany and astronomy," answered Knowlton gravely. "What did Lao-Tze say?"

"Abandon your wisdom and cast away your prudence, and the people will be a hundredfold more happy. Renounce your philanthropy and throw aside your justice, and the people will return to filial piety and fatherly compassion. Renounce your cleverness and forego your gains and thieves will disappear. Appear in your own unadorned simplicity, preserve your purity, curb your selfishness, and curtail your ambitious desires." Arden pushed aside his coffee untasted and lighted his cigar. "Those words of the wise Chinaman sum up our philosophy. We will drive them into the heads of men."

"But the Chinese sage says 'abandon your wisdom,'" protested Knowlton.

"Yes," returned the Doctor, smiling, "the wisdom of twenty-five hundred years ago, the wisdom of our own day. We will force its abandonment

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and give in its place knowledge. With right thinking all the rest will come."

"Were Lao-Tze alive now, he would be of the company," said Knowlton solemnly. "Dr. Arden—Rollins, let us drink to the company and to the quick coming of that day when all men have right understanding."

Now my own understanding was evidently all wrong, for I laughed as I drank the toast, but when I saw the grave way my companions regarded me, I, too, became grave. Arden's mouth twitched gently, and he seemed to be struggling to beat back a look of open contempt.

"You cannot be serious in all this?" I exclaimed.

"Why isn't it right?" asked Knowlton, as if it were absurd for me to doubt the Doctor's reasoning.

"It sounds right," I admitted, "but to carry out your theory of useless property you will have to change human nature. The women alone will keep you busy until doomsday."

"We shall not change human nature, we shall mould it," Arden said. "It is always changing of itself. Time was when men ate one another. They have improved. Now they eat themselves. But, Mr. Rollins, when our company——"

"Your company?" I interrupted. "What is this company of which you speak?"

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"It is an organization that will lead mankind to happiness," he answered solemnly. "It is made up of men of the world, men who can think and act, men who will be followed. There are but twenty of us now, all that could qualify, but as the centuries go on the company will grow."

"Have you all given up your useless property?" I demanded. "Are you living the simple life you would impress on others?"

"Not at all," said the Doctor. "The minute we did that we should lose the world's respect and cease to be a power. We should be regarded as cranks and theorists. To be followed you must inspire respect. What do men respect—power, we have that, the power of brains; knowledge—it is ours; muscle, courage—the company has the finest; family—the noblest house in Austria has given us its head; clothes, even clothes, we have not forgotten." Arden looked at our companion. "I met Mr. Knowlton this evening for the first time. I knew he had joined, but I had not been informed as to his fitness."

Knowlton took this with great good nature. He is really a splendid specimen of the animal man, and, seeking mere physical beauty, the company could have chosen no better. But he was not content to let his election rest on so trivial a qualification as his wardrobe. "You forget, Dr. Arden,"

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he protested gently, "I have been developing my mind."

"Impossible!" I exclaimed. "You do not mean to tell me honestly that you have taken to learning?"

"Certainly," was the calm reply. "You see, Jim, when I left the university I supposed myself an educated man. Thanks to my father and my uncles, I did not have to work, but I had to have something with which to occupy my educated mind. I took to clothes and horses and society. Of the three I found that horses entertained me most. But there came a time when I discovered that exercising high steppers did not exercise my wits, that I had still a little intellect unused after conversing with the stable boys. It is splendid to follow the hounds on a crisp fall day; it hardens the muscles and clears the brain. But what is the use of hard muscles when you have nothing to hit at, or a clear brain when you can think no thought worth thinking? I began to be bored. Then, by good fortune, when wandering about Europe last winter, I fell in with the company."

"It is a great day for every man so blessed," rejoined Arden solemnly.

Now I believed. But to my conception the company was nothing more than some ethical society, an organization of well-meaning men, who for a

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time would carry on a strange propaganda by Sunday-morning meetings and tracts, by publishing a magazine and nominating a candidate or two for petty local offices. It would thrive awhile, add to itself a few spectacled theorists and benevolent old women, and then go the way of all such schools of virtue.

"I suppose you have opened an office here," I said in a tone of mild sarcasm.

The Doctor laughed. "New York, Mr. Rollins, is not the world. A single province in China has as many inhabitants as our whole United States. As a matter of fact there are only two New Yorkers with us now, our friend Knowlton and another, our treasurer, a man who has won twenty millions in honorable business enterprise making necessities—you should see him stripped for wrestling. So, you understand, when any one asks our office address, we say simply 'Earth.'"

"Well, how do you propose to drive these strange ideas into the human race's head?" I asked, still amused. I even found myself wondering why Wade had ever entrusted his life to the care of this dreaming surgeon.

"That is our secret," was the quiet answer. "A few years will reveal our method. It is so new, so forceful, that the world will ring with it. We shall be hooted at, maligned, hounded, but what is that

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to the company?" Arden paused and regarded me fixedly. "Tell me, Mr. Rollins," he said after a moment, "what you do for a living."

"I am a lawyer by profession," I answered, surprised at finding myself thus suddenly placed upon the rack, for it was a rack, so sharply did those eyes cut into me. "As a matter of fact my father left me a comfortable fortune, but I work simply for occupation."

"I see," said Arden. "Then, of course, you know everything."

"What do you mean?" I asked, nettled by his insistence.

"I mean you found that there was nothing left in the world for you to learn so you took to law to pass time. You wearied, of course, retracing your steps through the heavens; in chemistry you knew all and came against a blank wall that stopped your progress; you mastered every language in the world and the history of those who speak them; you discovered the nature of the electric current, and botany ceased to offer you new marvels. Briefly you had pumped the well of knowledge dry, and to save yourself from *ennui* sought refuge in an office, making other persons' wills, hunting up titles to out-of-the-way lots, foreclosing mortgages, and bringing damage suits."

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"I am ambitious," I retorted hotly. "I want to make a name for myself."

"A name," returned the Doctor, with gentle pity. "The one given you at your birth would be sufficient. You are not making a name—you are advertising the one you have. Now a friend of mine, a wise friend, has a theory that names are the cause of most of our trouble. The world would be better off, he says, if it were made a penal offence to bear a name. A name gives a man the suggestion of a distinct and important identity. It makes him self-conscious. With self-consciousness he begets vanity and selfishness, and these goad him into the mad struggle for things that are vain. What good would it do you to be rich or powerful or wise if no one knew who you were except your family and friends? A great deed should be done for itself, not for the advertising. Abandon names and the human race would attain one great level, jealousy would cease, and we should take up life anew in peace and good-will."

Arden was so carried away by this idea that he stopped speaking, and seemed to be looking off over my head to that day when life would be a great calm sea with men coming like the ripples, from the unknown, unnamed, sporting their few brief moments in the sunshine and returning unknown to the deep. The theory was so astounding

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that in trying to grasp the force of it, I could not raise my voice in protest. Even Knowlton was surprised and gazed in wonder at the strange philosopher.

"Surely that is not in the plan of our company!" he exclaimed suddenly.

The question brought Arden back to the present. "No. That is too radical. The company is above all things conservative. But you should hear my friend when he speaks of the influence of the name on the human character. The subject was brought to my mind by the plea of ambition made by Mr. Rollins. Ambition is but a synonym for selfishness. He tells us that as he knew everything, all life left him was to work to acquire more property and advertise his name."

"I did not say any such thing," I retorted. "I pleaded guilty to ambition, but as for your chemistry and astronomy and botany I am absolutely ignorant of them."

"Then, after all, there is left something better for you to pass time with than your wills and deeds and titles," returned the Doctor reprovingly. "To me one of the strongest arguments against a hereafter is that the vast majority of the human race have not the intellect to enjoy doing nothing for eternity. But our company is concerned with this world. Think, Mr. Rollins. You hear a lot of

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prating about the purpose of this life of ours, and the popular belief is that it is so unsatisfactory that the future must offer something better. In contemplating the future we forget the present. The earth is beautiful. It must have been intended as a playground for a happy race, the human children. Countless pleasures are offered them, countless fascinating puzzles are in the heavens, countless engrossing problems in every meadow. Somehow they got started wrong and fell to making mud pies. But they are growing. Now the world is like a back lot with the children playing a brawling game of shinny, cracking one anothers' heads as they chase an old tin can. They are growing—they are growing."

"It is time for school," said Knowlton, smiling gently.

"Exactly," said the other. "We have twenty teachers. Those teachers, Mr. Rollins, have learned to live. We do the things that you do, but wisely. Then we do more. I love a horse, riding, wrestling, golf. They harden me for my play, but when I play I go to the East. I wander afoot from the Yalu to the Ganges. The two pleasantest years of my life have just been spent in the Lhasa palace of the Dalai Lama studying ancient Buddhistic manuscripts. And from Thibet to New York is a long way, but it is glorious to stand with the company."

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"It is glorious," said Knowlton solemnly.

The spell was over me. I was blinking at the light. There was a company. This man might be a dreamer, but he had knowledge, and his whole manner spoke for his sincerity. Strange as his theory was I had not combated it, and a few words had exposed the littleness of my own life. Then Knowlton was no dreamer, no theorist. He knew the mystery. Knowing it, he had turned from idleness to study. Some strange power had taken him from the stable to the telescope. There must be fascination in the game. It must be worth the playing.

"I want to know more of your company," I said, leaning over the table and looking Arden full and frankly in the eyes.

He glanced about the tables, where a score of men were lingering over their dinners.

"Is there any place in this club where we can be alone?" he asked.

"We shall go to the library," Knowlton said.

So in the quiet of that great room we three sat for an hour, smoking, I silent, while my guest unfolded his whole theory of life, and Knowlton, the careless and thoughtless, broke in now and then with some illuminating suggestion. The Doctor spoke simply, but with conviction. He called to his aid the best the world's philosophy offered, the

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Vedas of the Hindu, the teachings of his beloved Lao-Tze, of Buddha and Confucius, Plato's dialogues and the Bible, Descartes, Montaigne, Spinoza, Kant, and the later wise men.

"Vanity is what we fight," he said in closing his argument. "I name the cause of trouble thus in the abstract. The head of our company puts it in concrete form, more forcibly to the lay mind, calling it the useless rubbish. The race sacrifices itself on an altar of silly trumpery which it has erected to the great god Vanity. When that altar has been destroyed, we can turn to knowledge, and with it will come contentment. Can't you understand now the reason of the company?" His question was put to me with a winning gesture of appeal.

"I understand," I answered gravely, for his words carried conviction. "Your theory is convincing. But the practice? How will you convince the world?"

"That is our secret," he said, rising. "Some day you may stand with us—then only will you know the plan in its fulness."

My guest and I parted in the hall of the club. He would not take a cab to Gramercy Park. A night walk, he said, was a wonderful rest to the muscles and the mind. The door closing on him, I turned back to the lounging-room to join Knowlton, who was standing at a window looking out.

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"Mr. Lee would like to know if you will make a fourth at bridge, Mr. Rollins," said a servant hurrying up.

Knowlton turned sharply. "Come home with me, Jim," he said. "It is a fine clear night, and I have a new telescope on my roof. I should like to show you some rather interesting things about the stars."

I followed him humbly.

CHAPTER XV

THE COMPANY'S MUSCLE

AT the suggestion of Dr. Arden the restriction which prevented Heberton Wade from going within six feet of any window of his house was removed after the first week of his captivity. He was deeply grateful for this. He had never been much of a reader, except at those wide intervals when he deemed it well to keep in the public mind that while a man of leisure he was a man of brains, and so contributed a letter to the *Standard* or a paper on some dull subject to the magazines. Time passed slowly when Arden was not about. The evenings were delightful, for then Amy came to dinner, and only on one night had she consented to let the Doctor leave his patient to take her to the opera. The opera wearied her, she said, as she knew not a soul in the whole parterre, and no one came to see her between the acts. Far better it was to cheer the lonely Captain; far better were those jolly dinners of three when he seemed to forget all his sufferings; far better the little group about the fire, with the two men in argument

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over her father's silly theory. Of course the girl held that theory silly, and sided entirely with their host in declaring it thoroughly impracticable. About the gold-headed canes, she would say, there could be little trouble, but unless you provided enough pearl collars for all the women in the world, what were you going to do? This question did not confuse Arden in the slightest. He realized, he would answer frankly, that women were the great stumbling-block in the way of his idea, but he felt sure that the day would come when they would have a sense of beauty; as civilization was driving nose-rings out of fashion in Ethiopia, so would right knowledge drive trumpery out of fashion in civilization. Wade was not so sanguine about womankind, and he found rare pleasure in defending their little vanities and artifices against the attacks of the ruthless theorist. He admitted to himself that the theorist was right, but had Amy Arden declared that nose-rings made a pretty face more charming or that a string of human teeth added beauty to a fair white neck, he would have heartily agreed with her. It was good to know that in all things they were in sympathy, and her grateful glances when he helped her to parry some sharp thrust were a wonderful balm for the cuts the Doctor gave him. To have her in the evening at his table, to have her at his fireside a few brief

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hours, repaid him well for the long days. But those were days of waiting and very tiresome. The restraint chafed him as the time went on, but he was doubly bound. He wanted to act, yet dared not. Had Arden released him from his parole he would have asked anxiously if he must dine alone that evening. He spoke foolishly who said that it was better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all—he probably married at an early age. Wade did not want to lose. He believed that to love and lose would be worse than war—for a while, anyway. The company must soon disappear, and Amy would go with it. Men engaged in crime like this, whatever their motives, would be judged by the law of to-day, however blind it was, and they were too clever to leave any trace behind them. It was true he had two names. Arden's he had supposed fictitious until the girl came, and then he could not believe that she was masquerading. She had disclosed the Baron's. If she was Amy Arden, the other was Friedrich von Kohlberg, a cavalry officer and a friend of the Kaiser, but did he seek the girl, he knew he could never reach her through the German. The company's ways were past his understanding. It left a loaded pistol in his hands as though it were a trifling toy. If its position were so sure that it could let him have weapons, still more impregnable must it be

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to bandy so carelessly with names. It feared nothing, and in this was its greatest mystery. In the quiet of his room he might stand erect, his hands clenched, his eyes intent as though the company were before him, his mind set in the purpose to defeat it, but once he took account of the odds against him he was dismayed.

Wade stood by the library window. It was the afternoon of the second Monday of his captivity, and wearying of his long hours of pondering over his problem and finding no solution, he had turned from his chair and the narrow beaten path before the fire to view the life outside. But he found little to occupy him. In the park some small boys were playing in the snow; a few wagons and carriages rattled along the street, but the neighborhood is a reposeful one and offers little excitement. A brougham drove up to his own door, the footman left a card, and it bowled off again. A jeweller's wagon followed it, and a half-dozen bundles were added to the company's store. Tom Garish's car paused one instant to let him run up the steps, inquire for the invalid, then fly away. Incidents like these did amuse him for the moment, for they called his mind from what he thought his tragedy to the comedy in which he was an actor. It was pathetic to see his kind neighbor, Henry Torrence, tottering up the steps for his daily inquiry as to

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the Captain's health, and to leave a friendly message for him; but when the prisoner saw Albert tenderly helping the feeble old gentleman down to the safe level of the pavement, he burst out laughing. A policeman paused a while to have a chat with Hawkins, who lounged out of the area-way to greet him; he saw the two talking together, and then the guardian of the law moved on, his fat thumbs caught restfully in his belt, his face aglow with a contented smile. But in the long pauses between these acts Wade would revert to his serious problem. When his rector, Dr. Barlow, of St. Edward's, got out of a hansom and left a card, he left also on the Captain's mind a distinctly unpleasant suggestion, that turned him from the window to the beaten pathway, to lounge up and down again, smoking furiously, now with head erect in defiance, now bowed in dejection. This was the clergyman who was so widely advertised to officiate at Wade's marriage to Lady Victoria Glyme; his picture had appeared in the *Standard* that morning, so his call was probably an appreciation of his good fortune. The wedding was set for Saturday, just five days away. The mythical bride-to-be was now on the sea on a vessel due on Friday. Only four days more could the company stay. That did not trouble Wade. But Amy must go! Whither? To Paris? Would Arden let her go to Paris, this Arden who looked into a man's brain

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as though it were a clock? He did not believe that. In an appeal to Arden his only hope lay. He had not the slightest idea that the girl regarded him as other than a friend of her father's, but all he asked was that he might bring himself nearer to her, to see her, to make her know and understand him. And when she saw that to him she was life, that to him life was to be with her, that his one thought was that he might give her all in life worth having, then she might listen. He did not care for the company and its crime, or its consequences to himself, if only when its work was done it did not carry Amy with it. Arden might listen now. He might see in this infatuation a sure way of binding his victim forever, which would be far better than to have him on the company's trail, for even though it did not hold him dangerous he could make trouble. Wade would not be a suppliant. He would speak boldly and with frankness to this thief, this lunatic, this dreamer, this enigma.

The prisoner was for action now, and he rang the bell. He rang three times and was unanswered. Much irritated by this lax service, he went into the hall and looked over the banister at Albert, the second man, on duty at the door, sitting in a chair there, a book and paper on his knees, in which he was deeply engrossed.

"Albert!" the Captain called sharply.

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The man paid no attention, but began writing industriously, apparently oblivious to all else. Wade watched him in silence, forgetting for the instant the purpose of his summons as his curiosity was aroused by the little scene below him. Albert looked up from his paper at the wall opposite him, and raising his hand, seemed to be drawing figures in the air for a minute. The hand paused. A smile flashed over his face. His head went down and he was lost in the paper again.

"Albert!" Wade shouted, "I want you."

The servant dropped his book and pencil and sprang to his feet.

"Pardon me, sir," he replied, coming up the stairs.

The Captain returned to the library and waited for him.

"Tell me, Albert," he said, as the man stood before him, "what was it that interested you so as you sat down there alone—in the paper, in the book, in the air?"

"Asymptotes," the servant answered simply.

Wade looked puzzled. "Ah!" he exclaimed.

Albert divined his trouble. "An old master of mine at Oxford used to say, Captain Wade, that the scientists might convince him that the earth and all that it contained just happened, but never that the asymptotes of the hyperbola with the

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equations that express the relation of the right line to the curve from the finite to the infinite were pure accidents, and not ordained of God."

"I see," returned Wade good-naturedly. "You were killing time."

"Not killing it—putting life into time," said the servant. He presented a strange picture, this handsome fellow in livery, now standing in an attitude of respectful attention, then forgetting his place to talk philosophy. "Mathematics, Captain Wade, is a fascinating amusement and I fill profitably those hours when I have to be close to the door taking in cards and wedding presents. I keep up my acquaintance with least squares, quaternions, and calculus, and as Descartes, a soldier and philosopher, took from the air itself the fundamentals of analytics, which certainly have been an immense blessing to the race, so I hope some day to stumble on an equation which will do a service, bring the heavens a little nearer, span a river with a steel web that would bear the world's weight, or lessen our hours of labor. Descartes, sir, would have been of the company."

"You, then," Wade cried, "are the polo-playing astronomer."

"I said nothing of astronomy," Albert answered. Only his livery now marked him the servant. "But polo is a grand game, isn't it? There

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is nothing finer than the race down the field, the free swing of the arm, the clean crack of the ball. It's a battle of horsemanship, of head, of nerve. I am the astronomer, Captain Wade, and I took up the science because it was one that could not interfere with polo. But I have forgotten." His expression changed to woodenness, his figure became awkwardly rigid. "What are your orders, sir?"

"I started to ask for Dr. Arden," the Captain answered, laughing, "but for the moment you interested me more in mathematics. I am not accustomed to seeing servants working over analytics. You might teach me about these asymptotes and things—time hangs so heavy on my hands."

"Because you pass time with your hands instead of your head, sir," Albert returned, forgetting his place again. "You really must hang heavy on the hands of Time. If you know mathematics the very air seems charged with interest, for from it, from nothingness itself, with a pencil and paper you draw the equations that affect our every interest in life, that measure the distances in the heavens, span rivers with bridges, and harness the electric current, so any moment you may stumble on a marvellous truth, hitherto unknown. As you saw me sitting—killing time, as you call it—I was exploring, but my travels were not bounded by mere continents. They began on the earth and extended to

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infinity." The man took a step toward the master. "I should like to open these pleasures to you, Captain Wade, but you know the company will soon be going."

"The company will soon be going," Wade repeated, with a touch of sadness. The thought that had held his mind so closely came back with added force, for he had surprised this servant at his strange pastime and knew that the man was not acting; his livery clothed one who was his better, and when Amy faded into air again, this man and his fellows would be around her guarding her. "Albert, can't I go with the company?" he cried in sudden appeal.

"What are your orders, sir?" returned the man, the servant, rigid and wooden.

"I want to see Dr. Arden," the prisoner exclaimed, angered, for he seemed to be knocking at a stone wall, calling to it to open and let him pass.

"Here I am, Captain Wade," came in the Doctor's cheerful voice, as he stepped into the room. He handed his hat and overcoat to the servant, and signed to him to leave. "What is the trouble—you seem disturbed," he added, as he dropped into his particular chair, folded his hands, and awaited an explanation.

"I shall be to the point, Doctor," Wade said, steadily "I want to marry your daughter."

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"Impossible!" exclaimed Arden, sitting up and staring at his captive.

"It is not impossible—it is very easily understandable," returned the Captain grimly. "She is a lovely woman. I have dined with her now seven evenings and been in her company about twenty-one hours. That is, I think, above the average time required for a lovely woman to turn a man's head, unsettle his mental balance, and make him think his whole life is in danger of being spoiled. Now if I had seen her for forty-two half-hours extending over a period of a year——"

"You misunderstand," interrupted Arden. "Many men have gone crazy about her in less than half an hour. There was the Duke ——" The Doctor paused abruptly. "I forget—poor devil! Most of them have recovered though, for love is a temporary ailment, Captain, and is cured easily by philosophy. You must be philosophical and all will come out well. Still I am very sorry that this has happened. You see, I misjudged you. I was told that you were a cold-blooded creature, without a grain of sentiment in your make-up, and in a weak moment, joining my own desire to see as much as possible of Amy with the wish to make your own burden less irksome, I let her come here." Arden rose, and took his favorite post. "It is impossible that she should marry you," he said firmly.

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"Why impossible?" returned Wade. "I grant, Dr. Arden, that your daughter does not care for me now. What I ask of you is the chance to make her see——"

"She has dined with you six times and been in your company about twenty-one hours—above the average," interrupted Arden quietly.

"With you always as a chaperon, Dr. Arden," said the Captain, in a gently cutting voice. "What I want is a chance to win her, and how can I do it sitting here with you, sir, smoking, talking about the good of humanity to come, and arguing over your wild theory of property? With you away——"

Arden laughed heartily. "With me away, Captain Wade, you would talk utter nonsense, you would look intense, you would lower your voice, you would sigh, finally you would tell her that without her you had nothing to look forward to but death."

"So men have won women since the beginning," Wade said, smiling. "I ask only the same opportunity. In four days you must go." The prisoner spoke now in a quick, earnest tone. "But why must you disappear—from the rest of the world if you may—but why from me? I shall stay. I shall pay the price and never lift a hand to bring you to justice—the justice of the day. Then is it not fair

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that in return, you, who have brought your daughter here, who have let me see her, and in seeing her come to love her, should let me have an opportunity to fight for her, to fight as men have fought for women since the beginning?"

"It is impossible!" Arden answered.

"Impossible?" cried Wade. "Why is it impossible for you, Dr. Arden, who, whether a thief, a lunatic, a mad theorist, are still a gentleman—why impossible to let an honorable man seek the woman that he loves?"

"The company!" said Arden sharply, as though that word answered all things. "I am sorry for this temporary madness of yours, but you will recover. Your honorable intentions are appreciated, Captain Wade, but against the great purpose of the company they stand as nothing. When we go my daughter must go with us."

"Then when you go, I, too, shall have a purpose," Wade returned, speaking slowly, his clenched hand lifted, his eyes intent on the impassive face before him. "That purpose will be to find you, and make the opportunity you refuse me. I do not care a farthing for your company, and if to reach Amy Arden I have to run down man after man at the cost of every dollar I have, I will do it."

"Nothing could fall in more with the wishes of

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the company," said Arden, smiling gently. "You see, Captain Wade, that would attract attention to the crime. Nothing would please us more than to have every police station in the world in an uproar over us. It would make our lesson doubly forceful. But come." The Doctor's tone was kindly now, and his smile one of friendliness. "For your own sake, and I only have good wishes for you, forget this infatuation. You are a man with everything to live for, and don't throw it all away in a wild, useless hunt for a woman. Did I let you speak to Amy, it could only be as a man who in four days, in this very house, will marry Lady Victoria Glyme. You have yourself misled her, and what would she say to you did you dare to offer her one word, one look, that would disclose your real mind. To disillusion her I must tell her of the company, its purpose, and its workings, and I would not take upon myself to convince a woman of this day that we were right. It is impossible." Arden laid a hand on his prisoner's shoulder, and angry though Wade was he dared not resent it, the voice was so kindly, the face so winning. "This is but a ripple on the current. You will forget her, Wade, won't you? Do not forget our lesson. Try to live. Keep your toys and enjoy them, but study the great game and learn to play it. We shall go soon. We shall watch you. Some day we may re-

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turn and ask you to stand with us. The company needs good men."

"I am ready now to join the company," cried Wade earnestly, his face lighting with sudden hope.

Arden let his hand fall and stepped back to the fireside. "Because you love a woman," he said, his voice hardening. "Is that a motive to enlist a man with all his heart in a fight against the world's vanity and madness? How would it look in our history to see written that Heberton Wade qualified because he loved the daughter of Edward Arden? Absurd!"

There was a long silence. Wade stood studying the floor while the Doctor watched the flames that were crackling at his feet.

Arden was first to speak. "Captain, I want you to understand my position. Were I ever to lift my finger for any man in an affair so trivial as this, it would be for one whom I should deem it an honor to have in my family. He has been patiently fighting for years for what you think you might win in a few days. Only a woman could tell you why he has not won. His position is among the highest in Europe. One day he walks at his king's side counselling him about an army; the next, he is with the humblest university student helping him in the hard struggle for knowledge. Stripped of his use-

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less trappings he is a splendid specimen of the wise animal. Judging you, I strip you of your trappings—I find you a respectable man, of mediocre attainments. Why, then, should I depart one hair's-breadth from the company's plan to further you in a silly pursuit? I like you very much. What I hope for you is that you will grow out of the narrow circle in which you move. Keep your foot there, if you will, but lift your head and view the world; study all men and all things—and the company will come again."

"There is no other answer for me!" Wade asked in a quiet voice, looking intently at his captor.

"None," was the firm reply.

"Then I shall fight you as best I can," said the Captain. "You understand?"

"Certainly." The curt word followed a long spire of smoke, which seemed to occupy Arden's attention.

"I hope, at least, we shall have Miss Arden's company at dinner while she stays," Wade said more gently.

"Hardly," Arden returned. "She will leave Wednesday. Perhaps you would like to say good-by to her. She would expect it, and will wish to thank you for your kindness to her. She is downstairs now, as we were running around town in the

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car and she came in with me, expecting that I should go out again with her. Of course, you will remember your parole."

"Certainly," answered Wade with a hard smile. "I appreciate your favor. I shall say good-by, but I am sure that I shall meet her soon."

The Doctor made no reply, but regarded his prisoner impassively as he left the room.

Heberton Wade went without hurry. Whatever his faults to the view of such as Arden, he was a man of courage, not one to whine when overwhelmed by circumstances, but one to lift his head and shoulders and shake them off, and go on steadily and fearlessly, though he moved in the arid desert, uncheered even by a mirage of the valley of contentment. He went quietly to take his farewell. He was acting his part. Still an invalid and a friend of her father's, who, by pleasant circumstance, had become a friend of hers, he was to see Amy Arden and wish her a safe journey into the air again, to nowhere. He reached the foot of the softly carpeted stairs. There he paused. Muffled by the heavy *portières*, but still distinct, sounded from the drawing-room a flow of German, rolling and sonorous. Wade did not understand. He looked through the narrow crevice in the curtains and his eyes translated what was said. The girl sat by the window, silent, studying the figures on the

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rug at her feet, while beside her, one hand upraised in pleading, his gaze fixed intently on her face, his voice rising and falling rhythmically, the Baron was speaking in the language of all the world. This was the man who walked with kings and students; the wise animal with whom Arden had so contemptuously compared him; a common thief in his house blessed with a privilege that was denied him, the right to fight for a woman as men have fought since the beginning. Wade thought only of the common thief then, and in his fury he would have fallen upon him, dragged him to the door, and hurled him down the steps. But there was Amy! What would she think of the eavesdropper, the brute who in his own house and in her presence attacked, without cause, a man whom he had once received as a guest, a friend of hers and of her father's?

He turned quickly and hurried along the hall to the dining-room, and there standing by the table called for Albert in a loud voice. The servant came.

"Never mind," the Captain said curtly. "I have found what I want."

Albert left. The front door closed sharply.

Wade brushed through the curtains into the middle drawing-room, pressing, as he passed, the button that turned on a blaze of light. He did not see

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all around him the scattered bundles and boxes, the loot of the company, but stood still, gazing down the long floor at the Baron, alone, erect, eying him with eyes distinctly hostile.

"Good afternoon, Baron von Kohlberg," said the Captain bowing. "I thought Miss Arden was here."

"Miss Arden has gone," returned the other quietly.

The Captain stepped past him to the window, just in time to see his automobile roll away, with a cavernous groan, almost jeering him. He had one glimpse of her as she turned and looked back at the house. Then she was gone—gone in his own car, into the air, to nowhere!

He wheeled sharply. "Baron von Kohlberg," he said, "do you wish to see me about anything?"

"I came to call on Dr. Arden," replied the German gravely.

"Dr. Arden is not the master of this house," said Wade, his voice rising in anger. He stepped to the *portières* and drew one aside. "After this kindly see him elsewhere. Allow me to show you to the door."

The soldier and metaphysician eyed the Captain, but did not move. "You understand why I am here, sir," he said calmly. "You know that I

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am an intruder for no mean motive. The company!"

"You are here as a common thief," retorted Wade hotly, "and if you don't go now I will throw you out."

The Baron smiled blandly and stood his ground. "You are insulting," he said. "But we of the company——"

Wade stopped him with a rush. He caught the German's collar with his right hand, driving his knuckles into the neck, and with his left hand grasped the other's wrist tightly. He had matched his wits against the company and been beaten, but he believed that man for man, his muscles hardened on the fields and hills, were as good as theirs. For an instant he had his antagonist and drew him toward the door. Then the Baron, with a sweep of his left arm, crashed his heavy fist against the Captain's ear, stunning him. They swayed back to the centre of the room, now clinched in close embrace, sweeping down a table and sending a fine vase in fragments to the floor. They tripped over a light French chair and for an instant it seemed that they must go down with it, but they hurtled through the air and brought up against the wall, where Wade was pressed hard against the jutting fireplace. The German was a sturdy man, a witness of all that Arden had said of the muscle of

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the company. Half-choked as he was, his face was close to his enemy's, the mild blue eyes starting from the head, the scars showing blood-red against his livid skin, even his close-cropped hair bristling with fury, as he seemed bent on driving his antagonist through the very wall itself. He was no longer the metaphysician, the musician, the quiet gentleman who walked with kings and students. Wisdom had gone and he was a simple animal. Wade saw his mistake in closing with this man. He should have trusted to the Anglo-Saxon fists and met his onslaught with a quick hand, a quick eye, and a quick foot. Then he would have beaten him. Now it was a contest of brute strength, and he was almost overmatched. With a furious effort he drove the Baron back, and half-turning caught him on his right hip. For an instant the German was off his feet, wavering, but he wound his free left arm around Wade's neck and clung to it, throttling him. The Captain tried to throw him, but failed. He turned again, facing the German, and they hurled against the wall. For a moment they paused, locked in crushing embrace, gathering strength for another effort.

Wade's hand was seized and drawn suddenly from the Baron's throat.

"Gentlemen, you are forgetting," came in Arden's voice, quiet but rasplike.

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Von Kohlberg's free arm fell to his side, and, stepping back, he glanced at the wrist still in the Captain's grasp.

"I think we have finished, Captain Wade," he said.

His arm was freed, and the Doctor stepped between the men.

"What is this about?" he asked, looking from one to the other.

"I assure you, sir, I have not the slightest idea," said the German, angry and panting. "Captain Wade has insulted me and assaulted me, and I demand an apology."

"An apology to a common thief?" retorted Wade with a sneer.

"Captain Wade, you are forgetting your parole," cried Arden.

"I am not," returned Wade. "I made no effort to escape, but finding this fellow wandering around my house as though he owned it, I ordered him away. He would not go, and I was throwing him out when you came."

"You acted like a ruffian," said the Baron hotly. "I shall demand satisfaction."

"We do not give satisfaction in this country," said Wade in a calmer tone but contemptuously.

"What a barbarous land!" cried the Baron.

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"Must a gentleman suffer insult here in silence? Do you always fight this way like a lot of ragamuffins?"

"We meet thieves that way—yes," replied Wade.

"You forget, sir, that the Baron is of the company," said Arden sharply. "And you, von Kohlberg, you disregard the company in considering yourself. What is the petty insult you endure from this man when compared to our great battle? Come—forgive him, and put the matter out of your mind. Remember that Captain Wade has a right to his petty struggles, and standing against him you stood for the company. The company forgets."

The German's expression quickly changed to mildness. "I forgot the company," was his quiet rejoinder. He bowed to the prisoner. "I pardon you, Captain Wade."

"I don't ask your pardon," returned Wade angrily, as he moved to the door. "Dr. Arden, that man may walk with kings and students, but if you must have him in this house, keep him out of my sight—let him stay in the pantry."

He went up the stairs, Arden and the Baron standing below watching as he ascended. Half-way, he turned.

"Doctor," he said pleasantly, "Miss Arden had

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left before I could see her. Will you please say good-by to her for me, and tell her I shall meet her soon again."

"I shall say good-by for you, Captain Wade," Arden answered quietly.

CHAPTER XVI

I SEE THE INVALID

THAT Tuesday afternoon when I saw Heberton Wade in accordance with Dr. Arden's promise, he seemed to me more a man affected in his mind than one recovering from an operation for appendicitis. I was much puzzled. It was not that he said anything in particular which indicated mental weakness. His brain was rather keener than usual, but his behavior was incongruous for one who was within four days of his wedding to a woman of the beauty and position of Lady Victoria Glyme. The very mention of her aroused his anger, and when I demanded the cause of his coldness toward her my answer would be a smile or a frown. Never before had I seen in him such sudden flights from laughter to melancholy. When I greeted him he was sitting in the library, contemplating the fire gloomily, in the half-light of the late afternoon, hardly changed from that night two weeks before when I had last seen him.

At the sight of me he rose and threw his arms

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around my neck. "Well, Jim," he cried, "it is good to see a friend again."

As we sat together in the firelight he regarded me steadily, and I him for a long time. We were so glad to see each other. It is good to have a friend like that—a good, square man, bound to you by no tie of blood, who loves you as a dog does, and whom you love as a dog does his master. I could rail at Wade, I could assail him for his foibles, I could treat him like a brute and drive him from me, yet I knew that he would watch to come back when my heart had softened. So would I with him. For we understood each other, when all the world's overgrowth was cleared away and we faced man for man. It is good to have a friend like that, a square friend who will stand by you like your dog, whatever your foibles, through the ups and downs of life—until he marries.

"It is splendid to see you again," said I heartily. "There have certainly been great doings since we met last."

"Great doings, Jim, strange doings," Wade laughed.

I studied his face as he became grave again. It was full and ruddy, clean-cut, and as good to look at as ever, and showed no trace of his illness, but seemed to me to be more forceful, more thoughtful.

"You have recovered wonderfully," I said.

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He looked up. "Jim, who let you in?"

"Morton, your trusty Morton," I answered. "Now tell me all about the wedding. What are the plans?"

"I believe," said he, "you had my friend, Dr. Arden, to dinner last week?"

"A delightful man," I returned. "But tell me about the wedding. I know practically nothing more of the arrangements than I have seen in the papers."

He paid no attention to my demand. "You have seen Morton twice, I believe?" he asked, leaning toward me and eyeing me curiously.

"Once before to-day," I replied in surprise. "He is looking well. Useful as ever, I suppose. But I am much more interested in Lady Victoria Glyme."

Wade rose and rang the bell. "The wedding is one thing I refuse to talk about," he said. "It worries me. Drop in on Friday, and you will hear everything."

Realizing how ill he had been, I was very wary about irritating him, but it did seem strange that his own wedding should be a disagreeable subject even to an invalid. I spoke softly, in a chiding tone. "To me, Wade, Lady Victoria and Saturday's great event are subjects of interest beyond all others."

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"They weary me," he rejoined, with a gesture of impatience. "I am very tired of hearing about them and reading about them. Still, Jim, I do want to thank you for the beautiful present you sent to Victoria. She will appreciate it when she sees it."

"You like it, then?" I returned proudly, for I had outdone myself on those pearls, and they meant a year of economy for me.

"It is a very handsome thingum——" Wade stopped. "A handsome thing," he added quickly, looking away from me. "We have received many very beautiful things."

He was laughing now, softly, but his merriment seemed to have a grip on him, and to be utterly without cause. He lay back in his chair and gave free vent to it, disregarding my presence entirely.

"Pardon me, Jim," he said after a few minutes. "There is something I want to tell you and can't."

"It must be the something that has unsettled your head," I snapped. "This appendicitis operation must have been on the brain. You refuse to talk about the wedding at which you have asked me to be best man. One moment you frown and the next have hysterics over nothing."

"Send Morton here, Albert," said Wade, addressing the servant who had answered his call. Then he turned to me. "Some day you will under-

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stand, Jim, but now please rest satisfied with knowing that I am to marry Lady Victoria Glyme on Saturday, the ceremony downstairs, Dr. Barlow officiating in the presence of one hundred intimate friends. More than that I really know nothing of any importance. I could only make a fool of myself by raving over Victoria. I am very, very happy. So let us pass to something else." He stretched himself wearily. "This life is a beastly bore, isn't it?" he exclaimed.

"Because you do not know how to live," I retorted. "The trouble with you and me has been ignorance and——"

My friend sat bolt upright in his chair, staring at me.

"What is the matter?" I cried.

"Where did you get that idea?" he demanded.

My speech had been unguarded. In my enthusiasm for the philosophy of Arden and the plan of his strange company, I had forgotten the obligation of secrecy imposed on me that night in the library of the Wanderers Club. I checked myself. A moment more of thoughtlessness and I should have been revealing to him all I had learned of the great theory and the little I knew of the band of men who were to wake up the sleeping world.

"It just occurred to me," I answered carelessly.

"It is a peculiar idea to occur to a man like you,

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Jim," retorted Wade, in a voice of doubt. "I suppose Dr. Arden gave you his views that night at dinner."

"Briefly," said I. "To tell the truth, he has set me thinking. Of course he has mentioned his views to you?"

"Occasionally," the Captain answered dryly.

The butler's appearance interrupted us.

"Morton," Wade asked in a sharp voice, "where is Dr. Arden?"

"Dr. Arden has gone out for the evening," Morton replied, with his usual grave stateliness. "He left word that he might not return until midnight."

"Very well," said Wade. "But don't go." He pointed to a bookcase at the end of the library. "I wish you would remove those volumes to make way for some new ones that are coming. Pile them up in the next room."

It was an unusual time, I thought, to have such work done, but I was not much surprised by any quirk of the invalid's. Undoubtedly, Morton in his employer's two weeks of illness had received many unreasonable orders, but excellent servant as he was, he attacked this task as though it were the most natural one, and went about it so quietly that I forgot his presence.

"What do you think of Dr. Arden?" Wade asked, his whole aspect becoming very cheerful.

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"An interesting man," I replied. "His theory about names is rather wild, but generally he talks keen sense. He is a little tiresome, though, when he goes back to Lao-Tze——"

"To whom?" cried Wade.

"To the eminent Chinese teacher, Lao-Tze," I answered.

"That is a new name in his philosophy," the Captain rejoined, looking much puzzled. Suddenly he leaned toward me and asked eagerly, "Have you noticed Morton?"

"He is an admirable servant," I answered, turning my head to see that the man had left us for a moment. "But we were speaking of Dr. Arden. He is a little tiresome when he quotes Chinamen who lived six hundred years before Christ. Yet I must say that his views of modern life interested me greatly."

My friend was regarding me with a puzzled expression, and apparently did not hear a word that I was saying.

"What is the matter with you?" I demanded sharply.

"Nothing," he said, laughing. Rising, he stood against the fireplace looking down at me. "How did Dr. Arden impress you in appearance?" he asked quietly.

"At first like any other rather short heavy-set

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man with homely features," I answered. "But when he began to talk——"

Again Wade was disregarding me and pacing up and down the room with his face set in a frown. Suddenly the frown was swept away by a laugh, and he threw himself into his chair.

"I should have known it," he exclaimed, as though he had just made a great discovery.

"Known what?" I demanded, very much puzzled by his behavior.

"Just how Arden would impress you," he replied with a quick change to extreme gravity. "Look here, Jim—Dr. Arden is a remarkable man, the most remarkable I ever met, and I can't make him out. You know his theory. Take my advice and beware of it. Don't let yourself get tangled up in its mazes."

"Where is the fallacy of it?" I returned.

"That is just the trouble with it," Wade responded. "I have puzzled over it for days, and I have to admit that what he says is true. But it is absurd and impracticable nevertheless. Then I ask why, and the only answer I can give is that I am myself ignorant, vain, and selfish, and I am only human. That makes me angry. I am a stumbling-block in the way of the Arden theory of useless rubbish, but remember there are millions and mill-

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ions of stumbling-blocks just like me in every class and everywhere."

"But Wade," I protested, "is it not true that we have come to vanity and selfishness through our ignorance, which gives us a wrong conception of what is worth doing and having for our happiness? Now if we can gradually and gently attain wisdom ourselves and lead others to——"

"See here, Jim," Wade interrupted, "you are beginning to talk just like Arden and all the rest of them——"

"Who?" I exclaimed.

"Arden and the philosophers," he answered, with a dry laugh. "Have you been studying asymptotes, too?"

"What in the world is an asymptote?" I asked.

"It is something that goes from the finite to the infinite with a hyperbola," he replied with a smile.

"It sounds most interesting," said I. "I shall look it up."

"Jim"—Wade became serious again—"did Dr. Arden happen to mention a company in which he was interested?"

"He did mention a company if I remember rightly," I answered, but I was on my guard. "Some kind of a concern that is going to turn the Sahara into a garden."

"That is not the scheme I mean," Wade rejoined

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carelessly. "It is one somewhat like it, though. Did he say anything——"

"Captain Wade," Morton interrupted in a quiet, suave voice, as he paused in the doorway with an armload of books.

"Well?" snapped my friend, angered by this intrusion.

"Dr. Arden asked me to warn you not to get on subjects that excited you," said the butler, in a tone of apology. "You know it is dangerous for you."

Wade sprang from his chair and glared at the man.

"I am sorry to have to remind you, sir," said the servant, almost abjectly.

"You are right, Morton," the Captain returned, in a softer tone. "But you needn't bother about any more of those books now. I shall call you when I need you."

"I notice that none of the pages are cut in these volumes, sir," said the butler gravely. "Perhaps you would like me to go through the library with a paper-knife some time."

"I shall call when I need you," said Wade very firmly.

To me there was something very impertinent in this servant's remark, though not in his manner, and I was surprised that his employer did not re-

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sent it more. What he had suggested was innocent enough of itself, but coming at that moment it seemed to have a little sting in it.

"Your man is inclined to forget his place," I said to Wade, when I heard the footfalls die away outside.

"Morton is a remarkable servant," was the careless rejoinder. "I don't suppose he meant anything, but it just happened that his remark fit in with our conversation. Let us see—we were speaking of Arden's theory of rubbish."

"I am convinced that his idea is right," said I, in all seriousness, for of late I had pondered much over what I had heard that night at the club. "The fact is, Wade, so firm is my conviction that he points the way to real pleasure that I have given up law and taken to learning."

"A spasm," laughed my friend. "Dr. Arden got me aroused to such a pitch that I read a dozen pages of Locke on the 'Human Understanding.'" His face became grave. He held up a finger in solemn warning. "Jim, don't lose your head, don't get carried away by any grand schemes to uplift the human race. The race won't like it. Keep on as you are, an average mediocre man. Be contented."

"Contented with what?"

"With what you have now."

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"With what I have now," I retorted. "With a roof over my head, a car, a few horses, and a law practice, and exercise my wits on mortgages and deeds and dead men's wills. I looked through a telescope the other night and saw a greater play than ever on Broadway. I want to see it again, Wade, and study it; to study the drama that goes on all around me and try to understand it."

"And asymptotes?" Wade inquired quietly.

"Yes, even asymptotes," said I, "if knowing them widens my view. How a man like Arden must enjoy living—a man who is at once a surgeon, an athlete, a traveller, and a philosopher; who one year is with the Dalai Lama in Lhasa probing into the mysteries of Buddhism, and another in the operating-room alleviating human suffering."

"Like my appendicitis," put in Wade in a gentle voice.

"Exactly," said I heartily. "From you he turns to his great scheme—" I had forgotten for the moment, but checked myself.

"His company?" cried Wade, leaning toward me eagerly.

"Yes," I answered carelessly, as I rose; "the one that is to turn the Sahara into a garden." I held out my hand. "Good-by, Wade."

My friend followed me to the door.

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"I dine to-morrow with the Cowleses," said I, by sudden thought. "Have you any message for Georgianna?"

He paid no attention to my question, but laid a hand upon my shoulder to detain me. "Jim, that theory of Arden's is right after all, isn't it? And he does make you feel foolish, doesn't he, when he points around at your silly rubbish? The game he plays is one for men, don't you think so—a game to wake you up and make you live? If you invest in that Sahara scheme of his, let me know."

I saw now that Wade had heard of the company, but was bound like myself to hold its purpose secret. "Perhaps," I said, smiling. "But the profits will be very large, and it is to declare dividends every minute, so you see it is rather a favor to get in."

He watched me to the foot of the stairs, then turned back to his room. Morton was waiting for me with my overcoat, and as he was helping me on with it he remarked pleasantly: "Dr. Arden asked me to express his regrets at not seeing you this afternoon, Mr. Rollins."

"I am sorry to miss him," said I brusquely, for that remark about the books still stuck in my mind, and I resent familiarity from my inferiors.

"He dines to-night with Mr. Knowlton, at the Gotham Club, sir," the butler went on, undisturbed

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by my coldness. "Perhaps you will see him there with his friend the Earl ——."

"With whom?" I exclaimed, for my engagement that night was with Knowlton, and I had heard nothing of the other guests.

"His friend the Earl of Garchester," answered Morton, opening the door politely. "I believe Baron von Kohlberg and several other interesting gentlemen are to be in the party. Dr. Arden was hoping to-day that he would meet you also."

"Tell him I shall be there, Morton," I said very graciously, as the butler bowed me out.

CHAPTER XVII

INTO THE AIR TO NOWHERE

THE sunlight slanted through the windows full upon the clock, and sitting up in bed, rubbing the sleep from his eyes wearily, Heberton Wade saw that the hour was ten.

"Albert!" he called.

At such a time of morning there was usually some one stirring about, preparing his bath or his breakfast, or ready to answer his orders, for the company had sought to give him every comfort. Now his summons fell on dead air.

"Hawkins," he cried, raising his voice to a pitch of anger.

He listened.

"Francis—Francis!" he shouted, springing to the floor and driving his thumb insistently against the electric button. In the depths of the house he could hear the muffled rattle of the bell, but it brought no one to him.

He slipped on a dressing-gown and sandals and stepped to the door.

"Dr. Arden," he called in a voice polite, but

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sharp enough to penetrate the floor above and the floor below. There was no reply.

Wade was wide awake. It was Friday, the day Lady Victoria would arrive, the day the company must go, the day of his freedom. He raised his voice furiously for Albert, Francis, Hawkins, Arden. It was his last summons. Either they must hurry to him now, or from him with quickened steps. If they did not answer, he was free and this was his day of action. But they had fled, into the air again, to nowhere!

The Captain went downstairs, without hurry, for he was well satisfied that the company had gone. In dealing with it, there was no gain in haste. Had he been the victim of ordinary robbers, he would have rushed to the telephone and stirred up the police; but he was so enmeshed in the fiction of the wedding that he had first to learn how he stood to the world outside before he made his outcry, and he had not much faith in the wits that the detective force would match against the intelligence of Arden and his companions. Against such as they deliberation was necessary, calmness, keenness, then the sudden blow. He had long ago made up his mind to that, and his easy demeanor, once he realized the situation, was a part of his preconceived plan. At the head of the basement stairs he gave them a final, formal summons, and, getting

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no reply, descended to the kitchen. He found the place in perfect order. Every pan was spotless; every kettle was in its place; the fire had been laid, only a match being needed to set it ablaze; close at hand upon a table, neatly set out, ready for a cook, was his breakfast, a bunch of luscious grapes, eggs, a fish, and a cup of ground coffee; beside them, carelessly forgotten in the moment of flight, was a memento of the mysterious man who had so lightened his burden of trouble, a curious old copy of the "Pensées" of Blaise Pascal.

"Andre—Andre!" he cried, laughing, a friendly farewell, for the Frenchman had not harmed him, had not knocked him down, nor confused him with strange philosophy.

"Captain! Captain!" came a shout from the hall.

In rushed Harris. At the sight of his employer, in dressing-gown and bath-slippers, standing by the kitchen range, the valet stopped and stared, wide-eyed. He was met in friendly fashion with a hearty slap on the shoulder and a genial laugh.

"Well, Harris, how did things go in the trunk-room?"

"Them crooks was certainly gentlemen, sir," the old man answered. In demeanor he was like one on whom the prison gate has just closed after a long term, turning from strange, uncanny ways,

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dazed to find himself in the old worn path where he knew every step, yet his face was full and ruddy. "What was they doing? The silver is in the dining-room. Look!" He drew from his pocket a roll of money, and, running his fingers deftly over the end, disclosed nearly twenty crisp ten-dollar notes. "I thought it was all a dream when they gave me a new one every day; I thought they would take them away from me when they left; I thought they would take everything—everything, but they didn't. It seems wrong to find things this way—just the same as they was before them peculiar weeks. Was they really robbers, Captain, or was they some new kind of missionaries?"

"Both—Harris. But how did you get out?"

"Just walked, sir. I got up this morning same as always, and dressed and knocked on the trunk-room door, for when I did that the gentleman who took care of me used to go and get my breakfast. No one came. I knocked and waited, and yelled and knocked, till I was almost starved. Then I tried the door to break it, and it just flew open, for it wasn't locked at all, and the gentleman wasn't there, and here I am, for I heard you calling."

Wade turned to the range and put a match to the fire. When it had blazed up he took a wooden chair and sat beside it, pondering.

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"Harris," he said after a moment, "there have been strange doings in the house."

"Most strange, sir," exclaimed the servant, who seemed to think this picture of the Captain at the kitchen stove a new fantasy of his dreams. "Yet I never see a nicer lot of thieves, sir. I was very comfortable, fed most excellent, and they brought me exciting books—a particular nice one about the Count of Monte Cristo—and I taught Mr. Albert pinochle, and he showed me backgammon and chess. At nights him and Mr. Hawkins would take me up on the roof for air—he could talk most interesting about the stars. I really never knew crooks could be so pleasant. But what was they stealing all that time?"

Now Wade spoke very solemnly, to make the servant feel deeply the need of his silence about the occurrences of the weeks past. "I do not yet know what they took, Harris, but I want to find out, and I am going to run these men down—these gentlemen—do you understand, and if you say a word to any one about this affair, you may block my effort to pursue them. They have paid you well, and I shall double that roll of yours in consideration of your trouble."

"Not one word will ever come from me," said Harris fervently. "I have no grudge against them robbers. That Mr. Francis, he was a pleasant

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talker, wasn't he, Captain? I did so enjoy it when he used to come up and sit with me, and tell me about the Hima-lion Mountains and the time he spent visiting the King of Siam. He spoke particular nice——”

A furious ringing of the door bell checked the voluble old man. The master signed him to answer, then turned to the range and breakfast, for he was exceedingly hungry. He had intended to order the valet to cook some eggs while he went to his room, dressed, and prepared for action, but his glance fell upon the book and his thoughts were called to Andre, who read Pascal as he watched the griddle, and from him to the company and its theory. Was this a menial task that he was spurning? His answer, made hesitatingly, was to open the table drawer for a spoon, and there among the great array of forks, knives, and ladles, he found, all crisp and fresh from a Paris press, Anatole France's "Sur la Pierre Blanche." This cook read widely. Doubtless he was a swordsman, too, quick with the rapier, and the hero of many duels. Doubtless he explored the clouds in air-ships and wallowed in the sea's depths in submarines. What a player of life that man must be! Wade closed the drawer softly. Would he humble himself when he cooked his own food, prepared in cleanliness a simple breakfast, and ate it hot from a fire at a

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spotless pine table? His caste forbade it. Castes are the strongholds of ignorance, and his own was so high that he had to sit in dining-rooms, take what came, and ask no questions. How much better were Arden and his fellows, who could go from court to kitchen; how much nobler this Andre, who could acquire knowledge while he scrambled eggs! He could be as good as they! Declaring that, he put the coffee-pot upon the fire, then turned to the table and the pans, the eggs and fish, and made them ready. Harris, coming back all excitement, found him at this menial task.

"I'll get your breakfast, Captain," he exclaimed, forgetting his own mission and trying to force himself between his employer and the humble table.

"I much prefer to do my own cooking," Wade said firmly, as he cracked an egg. "Who was at the door?"

The question, sharply put, brought the old man to the more serious matters of the moment.

"Reporters, sir. They are in the hall now—a dozen of 'em. They insist on seeing you."

Wade dropped the egg to the floor and turned on the valet. "About what?" he demanded.

"Your wedding, sir. They was asking about your wedding, and they almost drove me crazy, and when I told 'em I had never heard of it they laughed at me. They said they must see you."

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The Captain started for the door. There he halted. It would look strange for Heberton Wade, clad in dressing-gown and bath slippers, to appear from the kitchen stairway and greet the assembled representatives of the press, who had come for information about his approaching wedding to Lady Victoria Glyme. Not only must he speak of his wedding, but of some new phase of his mythical romance of which he was still ignorant, and he had no mind to face these shrewd inquisitors until he knew what last step the company had taken. Yet it was impossible for him to reach the upper stories of the house unseen, so for the moment he was much perplexed.

"Harris." He turned to his cooking. "Tell the reporters that at twelve o'clock I shall issue a statement to such of them as come here. At present I cannot see any one."

The servant moved to execute the command, when he was stopped by an added injunction:

"Go upstairs to my room first and make it appear to them that you got your orders there instead of in the kitchen."

The valet saw the point and went away softly smiling.

Andre was a better cook than he, Wade said to himself, but though the fish was a trifle burned, and the coffee weak, the eggs were excellent, even

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Harris expressing approval and astonishment at the Captain's culinary art. He really enjoyed his breakfast, and could easily improve on it by simply keeping his mind intent upon the range and not letting his thoughts run riot while the food scorched. So he rose well satisfied, and stood a moment contemplating the simple pine table, which was spotless no longer, but exceedingly offensive to the eye. And there amid the egg-shells and the fish bones, the ugly débris any animal would leave in feeding, lay Andre's quaintly printed volume, a farewell message to him! In pages such as these was the one satisfying feast for man in court and kitchen, the clean feast that filled the head from a larder that never emptied, the small loaves and fishes that the multitude could feed their brains on and leave a still inviting board. If he had to be an animal, why not be a wise one? That was what the company taught, and the company was right. Opening his eyes, then helping him to go with them, these men would have given him far more than they had taken. But they had left him to stand alone in the darkness, while they moved on with elbows touching, laughing at their sleeping fellows, yet pitying, their blood stirred by the joy of a great adventure, a strong, wise band. He would follow! For Amy, alone, he would follow! But whither and how?

Harris thought that the Captain's problem lay

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in the litter of plates and pans which he was contemplating so seriously.

"Will you wash the dishes, too, sir?" the servant asked, for to him the world was all askew.

"Not to-day," Wade answered quietly.

He went upstairs, slowly moving as he pondered, and the sun slanting into the dining-room called his eyes to the table which the company had set for his breakfast. It looked inviting in the bright room, the white cloth, the simple silver service and the clear glasses all aglow in the morning light, and he saw that as in the humbler kitchen Andre had expressed a thought for him in the fish and eggs laid out for cooking, here was the hand of Albert, the polo-playing astronomer. This gang of thieves had left his house more perfect than they found it. Nothing had been taken from him. They gathered their plunder from the town, yet under their spell his anger against them was not so much for leaving him to pay the town as for not letting him know whom to pay. The matter of Lady Victoria Glyme was easily settled, for he had only to break the engagement, but to discover who had sent her wedding presents and the value of those gifts was a puzzle hard to solve, and so grotesque in its possibilities that he dropped into a chair at the head of the table to stretch out and give vent to an explosion of laughter. He saw himself advertising

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for all who had sent presents to put in claims; he saw these claims coming in by thousands, and his special detective bureau separating the genuine from the spurious; he saw the amazement of the world and a story for the papers far more sensational than the wedding romance. This was serious. However good the company's motives, it had left Wade in an ugly tangle. He sat up, frowning. There at his right hand, in the neatly folded copy of the morning *Standard*, his breakfast reading, was Arden's last stroke in the great lesson of intellect and crime. So important had the editors deemed these few paragraphs that they were set in large black type, widely leaded and capped by an imposing headline:

WADE WEDDING OFF

CAPTAIN'S ENGAGEMENT TO LADY VICTORIA GLYME
BROKEN

HER LOVE GREW COLD

SHE DID NOT SAIL ON OCEANIC AFTER ALL—SICK
MAN'S PHYSICIAN MAKES STATEMENT

At times in the last few weeks when Heberton Wade read these romances woven by the clever Arden, he found it hard to believe that Lady Vic-

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toria was not coming to claim him, and now he almost felt a flush of resentment at being so meanly jilted, and next a real sense of satisfaction at his good fortune, for the *Standard* had at last settled her age positively as fifty-seven.

"It became known late last night," said the journal solemnly, "that the invitations to the wedding of Lady Victoria Glyme, of England, and Captain Heberton Wade, the well-known society man of this city, had been suddenly recalled yesterday. As yet no explanation has been given. A reporter of the *Standard* called at one o'clock this morning at the Gramercy Park residence, and saw Dr. Edward Arden, who has been attending Captain Wade through an operation for appendicitis.

" 'It is true that there will be no wedding,' said Dr. Arden. 'You can realize that this is a purely personal affair and one in which the public has no interest. Captain Wade is still very ill, and certainly will say nothing. He feels that it would be highly improper for him to speak. I will tell you, however, that we learned to-day for the first time that Lady Victoria did not sail on the *Oceanic* as we had expected. A cablegram sent by her Thursday, a week ago, went astray, and was not in my patient's hands until to-day.'

" 'Who broke the engagement?' inquired the reporter.

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“‘It is manifestly improper for me to talk,’ answered Dr. Arden.

“‘Our London office cables that Lady Victoria is really fifty-seven years old,’ said the *Standard’s* representative. ‘Further, she has been for several months in upper India engaged in Salvation Army work.’

“‘I understand that that is true,’ said Dr. Arden. ‘Lady Victoria is a philanthropic woman. In spite of her age, she is still very lovely and well preserved. When I met her in London last fall I could have sworn that she was not a day older than twenty-seven.’

“‘What will be done with the presents?’ was asked.

“‘A number have been received here, and were held awaiting her arrival,’ the physician replied. ‘They all came from friends of Captain Wade’s and will, of course, be returned with Lady Victoria’s approval and regrets. The situation is rather unusual, but there is nothing else to do.’”

This exhausted the *Standard’s* information as to the collapse of the romance that had so filled its columns for days. The news had evidently reached the office late and there was no time to squeeze in a picture, the lives of the principals in this affair, or an account of the facts preceding the remarkable *dénouement*. Wade grasped the situation in

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a flash, and the master-thief's guarded words gave him a hint of his own course.

"That Arden is a clever devil!" he cried, bringing his fist down on the table.

He arose and shook himself, shook off the lethargy of years, and faced the fight before him, alert, keen-brained, and glad. The world would deride when it heard his story, but he would do what was right and smile at the jeering. He would act in the light of to-day as the company expected, and warn the sleepers. He would pay the price the company demanded of him, and then set out in search of the wise men, hunting for Arden, for Albert, for Francis—for Amy and for real life!

With his mind clear, Wade was not long in preparing for action. His first task was the statement for the press, which did not occupy much time, though a half-hour was spent in drilling Harris in the art of meeting the inquisitors and saying nothing. Next he had to arrange by telephone with the garage to have his car put in charge of a new chauffeur, for Jacques had disappeared. Then the office of his lawyers, Marlowe, Jennings & Marlowe, was called on the wire. The senior member of the firm, his confidential attorney, happened to be South shooting, but Mr. Jennings assured their client that nothing of any moment affecting his affairs had occurred in the course of his illness;

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Dr. Arden had kept them well posted as to his condition and they had deemed it best not to worry him with business matters. The Captain's mind flashed to Jim Rollins, who had given up law for learning, and he laughed so outrageously that Mr. Jennings began to wonder if hysteria was a complication of appendicitis. But he was graciously thanked for his consideration and informed that his client would come downtown in the course of a week or so.

As Wade hung up the receiver, the door bell rang out the hour of noon. To him it was the call for play to begin. He hurried upstairs and posted himself by the banisters, in that very spot whence he had first seen Amy Arden. Peering cautiously over, he watched the reporters file in, a goodly company, that filled the narrow hall. There were several dapper youngsters, new from the universities, who had chosen journalism as a career full of promise of power and knowledge, and were just a trifle annoyed that their talents must be wasted on weddings. There were real newspaper men, the men of the street, shrewd observers, who had spent years in a game that led through "residence and tenement." They looked upon life with a cynical eye, for it was only a story, and every man a shell full of facts, a few of which might be worth printing. What to them was the pomposity of a great-

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ness that was measured in the "morgue" in their office by a waiting obit of two sticks, and this likely to be cut in half when the moment of use came, that room might be given for a prize fight? There was the copy-boy who had fought his way from the dust brush to the pen, had sharpened his wits on the world, and come to be but a poor respecter of persons; he had cornered the leaders of politics and finance with his questions, he had sat for days in divorce courts and legislative investigations, and so was perhaps a little near-sighted. There was the old reporter, the failure, who had gone up to a desk, then lacked that mysterious something that carries men on—not perseverance, not education, not temperance, not honesty, but another unknown quantity in life's equation; he was back again on the street and soon would be copying hotel registers or covering a hospital; like a sponge he had sopped up facts all his life and now was squeezed dry. Speaking for them was a scholarly looking man, of middle age, who carried under his arm a large roll of papers and magazines. His tousled red hair, his drooping eyeglasses from which dangled a broad black string, and the humorous twist of the mouth contrived to give him the appearance of a misanthrope; but then he could laugh when he told you how he had made a three-hundred-dollar space bill the week when he exposed

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the great timber fraud, saved millions for the State, and turned a political party out of power. Had Harris known what he was facing, he would have fled, but his ignorance was his support, and he met the attack with a boldness that his master would never have dared to assume.

"Kindly tell Captain Wade that we have come according to his appointment," said the spokesman, as though this visit were a friendly one to inquire after the invalid's health.

"Captain Wade is confined to his room and can see nobody," returned Harris brusquely. "But I have the——"

"Tell him that I am from the *Standard*, Mr. Moseley, of the *Standard*," interrupted the scholarly man, with a gesture of justified annoyance. "There are fifteen of us here, representing every morning and evening paper in the city, including the *Abend Zeitung*, and in case he prefers to see only one, they have deputed me to act for them. And by the way"—Mr. Moseley spoke as though there was not the slightest doubt that the servant would hurry upstairs at once with his name—"the Captain will, of course, have no objections to my photographer taking a few pictures around the house—just a snap, you know, at the room where the wedding was to have been."

The mild eyes regarding the servant through the

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drooping glasses, the eyes that had made many a politician wriggle uneasily, were no match for this old Harris, whose life was as clean as an unused slate.

"I can't bother the Captain, sir," he said with a politeness that came of his calling, not of his heart. "Here is the statement. I shall read it."

"But, my dear man," began Mr. Moseley in protest, "Captain Wade surely does not know——"

"The Captain knows nothing," said the valet blandly. "He is ill—he ain't capable of knowing anything. Now will you gentlemen take this down?"

"If you allow me, I shall read it to the others," Mr. Moseley suggested, putting out his hand.

"My orders is to read it to you," Harris returned firmly. He backed to the stairs and stood on the bottom step. "Are you ready, gentlemen?"

There was a minute of bustle while large rolls of paper, ready for copious notes, came from every pocket, and expectant faces were turned to the servant. Then from the back of an envelope Harris read slowly in the expressionless voice to which his master had trained him: "Regarding the reported breaking of his engagement of marriage to Lady Victoria Glyme, Mr. Wade feels that it would be highly improper for him to speak. Any statement that will be made must come from the family of

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the Earl of Garchester, who, he believes, are now either in London or at Garchester Towers, Hants, England."

"Is that all?" demanded Mr. Moseley in an indignant tone, when Harris had stepped down and crumpled the envelope in his pocket.

"Yes, sir," answered the servant woodenly.

"Well, we should like to see Dr. Arden," put in the representative of the *Evening Earth*.

"Dr. Arden is with the Captain now," the valet answered. "He will not be seen. It would be manifestly improper for him to speak."

"How about the photographs?" asked Mr. Moseley.

"My orders is to read the statement, sir. No pictures was mentioned."

The *Standard* man put on his hat and moved toward the door.

"It is peculiar about this class of people," he said to the *Evening Earth* reporter. "Here this chap Wade floods our office for weeks with type-written stuff about his wedding, pictures of himself and everybody connected with him and Lady Victoria Glyme, and yet when we want to ask him a few simple questions to round the story up, he is as shy as a kitten."

"But this is the wrong kind of advertising," re-

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joined the other, nodding his thanks to Harris for his service.

From the library window Wade watched the company in retreat, Mr. Moseley leading with his old friend of the *Earth*, to whom he was expressing frank opinions of the vanity of everybody in the world, rich and poor alike, not even excepting himself, he was so cynical. The cub reporters followed with discouraged steps, for they knew that where the great Moseley failed there was little hope of news, and in the rear came three photographers, lugging cameras, and discussing not the vanity of man, but his general inconsiderateness of others. Only the *Abend Zeitung* representative lingered. He was suspicious of these Americans, and feared some deep-laid plot to beat him, some scheme to be rid of him, and then return and get all the inside facts. When they were out of sight he fixed himself comfortably against a fireplug, drew from his pocket the "Dreams" of his beloved Jean Paul Richter, and settled himself to watch and read.

CHAPTER XVIII

INSPECTOR HARRITY

CAPITAN VADE!"

Heberton Wade was about to enter his car, but paused with one foot on the step, and turned.

"Good morning, sir," he said, facing the fat little man who was regarding him with mild blue eyes.

"I am die reborder of die *Abend Zeitung*."

"Indeed," returned the Captain with great good nature, for the day was bright, the air was keen, and life was full of interest. Albert, the polo-playing astronomer, could find pleasure in delving into the brain of a London cabby, and this was the first really human being to whom he had spoken in weeks, excepting Rollins and Harris; he might find it worth his while to stop one second for the gentle fellow, shabbily dressed, carrying a learned-looking book, his eyes expressing apology and appeal. "So my fame has reached Berlin, all on account of my Lady Victoria Glyme."

"*Die New Yorker Zeitung*," corrected the German. "I haf myself chust come from Berlin, und I do nod unterstant dis reborting. Blease dell

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me abowid dot vetting. Die statement ist nod blain."

"My dear sir, the statement contains all I can say," laughed Wade.

"Bud you do nod dell vy you ton't marry die vomans," exclaimed the other in a tone of perplexity. "I vant die vacts, Dose Amerikaner reborders, dey vill haf everydings mitowid asging. Bud I do nod unterstant your vays. How can I ged die vacts mitowid you dells me?" The little German smiled. His position was so perfectly clear that a child could comprehend it, and here was this grown-up man gazing at him with an expression of deep wonder. "I sit dere on dot golt vireblug von whole hour, mit von eye reating 'Chon Paul,' mit die odder vatching, und den you gomes und dells me you know noddings abowid your own vetting. Ach!" He threw back his head and laughed gayly.

"Your reasoning is perfect," said Wade with a kindly smile, for he had been picturing himself earning his own living in Berlin this way, digging for worthless facts that a foolish, inquisitive world demanded, addressing in broken German some brusque personage to whom accident of birth sent a fine car while he sat on a fireplug, reading with one eye and watching with the other. He wondered how a man like von Kohlberg would treat him, a

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man who walked with kings and students. Would he fly away disdainfully, or would he stop and learn for himself some more of human nature? "Tell me," he cried, now suddenly turning inquisitor, "when in Berlin did you ever hear of a man named Friedrich von Kohlberg—a baron, I believe?"

"Do I loog lige a vool?" exclaimed the *Abend Zeitung* man with a gesture of disgust. "Mein Gott! I studied him!"

"Studied him?" returned the Captain sharply. "Ah! you studied his metaphysics?"

"Und his museeck." The little German forgot his own mission at the mention of that name, and his pallid face was alight with enthusiasm. "I know him lige a pook. He ist die most atvancet dinker ve haf—so atvancet dot only bud a few can unterstant him. Efen in Chermany he ist die most known as a cheneral of gavalry. Did I hear of von Kohlberg! Von Kohlberg at forty year dink lige Kant, write der museeck lige Wagner, und vas die finest soltcher in die army!"

Heberton Wade leaned against the open door of his car and looked off into the sky. In those last unreal days of his captivity he had come to believe in the company, but it was almost as he would believe in a dream, these men were so vague, so mysterious. The little things had aroused his faith

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—Hawkins helping the sufferer in the storm, Albert studying the asymptote while he worked, Andre reading Pascal and Anatole France in the kitchen. All Arden's logic and his easy assurance of power were not half so convincing as pictures like these, that had been unfolded naturally and with so much appeal. The Baron, the soldier and metaphysician, was a mystic creature like the rest. The man that Amy Arden had made known to him was a sturdy fighter against whom he had matched his muscles, whom he had tried to throw out of his house and had ordered to the pantry. The Doctor's praises had seemed fulsome and tinged, perhaps, with the ardor of the company, yet he had accepted it as true that von Kohlberg was a man of high place and wide learning. Now came this little German speaking in reverence of his fellow-countryman, forgetting the cheap title; lauding first the thinker, then the artist, and then the soldier. He stripped him of his trappings and showed him a great man. He raised him to a height that Heberton Wade, of New York, who had done nothing in life but inherit, could never reach. He made him real. With von Kohlberg the company grew in power and fascination. What must be the band in which so great a man could slave so humbly? What Arden, who commanded? What Albert, and Francis and Hawkins? Wade was

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angry, but his anger was against himself that he had doubted so long, that in his love for his own rubbish, his fear for his own little dignity, he had let them go into the air and leave him.

"Bud, Capitan Vade!"

Wade looked down at the little German, regarding him now in such friendly fashion that the reporter hurriedly drew a roll of paper and pencil from his pocket and prepared to take notes.

"Vile ve speag of die great von Kohlberg, I forged your leetle vetting." He smiled genially. "Now die vacks. It vas nod blain in die statement vy——"

"Come," said the Captain, holding open the door of the car and beckoning the other to enter. "I am going to police headquarters, and while we run downtown I can give you enough to make a fair story for your paper."

As the automobile, under Wade's orders, rolled slowly along, the *Abend Zeitung* man won where the great Moseley had failed. Expressionless, he drove his pencil over page after page with his fat white hand, asking no questions, but losing not a word of what the Captain told him. Wade made his story very clear and strong, beginning with that night when the company seized him, leading on through the time when Arden unfolded his theory of robbery and rubbish, and explaining the myth

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of Lady Victoria Glyme and the ease with which the town had been gulled. He gave even the names with the exception of von Kohlberg's, so great was his faith in the cunning of the company, and rounded out his narration with a few suggestions of his own as to the danger the society of to-day must fear from a band like this. At police headquarters, the two men left the car, and paused a moment on the sidewalk to part with a friendly handshake.

"I tank you, Capitan Wade," said the *Abend Zeitung* man. "Dot vill make a goot golumn—a sblendid golumn." The pale, chubby face lighted, and a fat finger was shaken in the air. "Ach! bud dot philosophy vas so putiful, yed die gompany it seems lige a tream!"

"It all seems like a dream," said Wade, quietly, turning to ascend the steps that led into the great white building where the police work. "Good-by."

"Capitan Wade!"

Wade looked around.

"Die great von Kohlberg, he could dink lige dot, so atvancet, so putiful. Die soltcher, die mu-seechion, die philosopher—he could run a gompany lige dot."

"Perhaps," was the quiet response.

And Wade went on to warn the sleeping world. Inspector Nathaniel Harrity, the head of the de-

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tective bureau, was surprised at the visitor who was ushered into his office, but he did not show it, for he was drilled in the art of hiding all emotion, which gives an impression of force and wisdom. He greeted Wade as though he expected him, knew exactly what he had come for, and would settle everything with a push of a button and a few orders. Now Harrity was really a clever detective, according to the standards of the day, the best that could be produced by a system that puts the protectors of society on a plane with the mechanic. In his young manhood he was a bartender, but endowed with plenty of grit and ambition he went to night school and educated himself for the high trust of defending virtue from the cunning onslaughts of crime. When he donned a uniform he quickly showed a keener intelligence than his fellows, and was raised to the detective work of the precinct. As a wardman, coping successfully with some of the petty criminals of the district and closing his eyes to the misdeeds of others, he found favor with his superiors, made friends with the political powers, and was transferred to the central office to join a company of detectives that we are told is the cleverest in the world. To-day Harrity commanded, and rightly, too, for he was a shrewd man of his kind, and as conscientious as possible, and, moreover, he had always been unscrupulously

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honest, which is to say that his sins had been of necessary omission, rather than commission. A reform movement lifted him to his high place in the police force, and his conduct met with such popular approval that when the liberal party returned to power they feared to oust him in spite of the influence brought by a subordinate, who was cleverer, but had once been convicted of blackmail and was saved from Sing Sing by the Court of Appeals. The inspector was a young man for his post, hardly forty, and was handsome in appearance and dapper in attire. He had long been ambitious to better his social position, and in the evenings frequented the famous cafés of upper Fifth Avenue. Did you see him sitting alone in a corner of Delmonico's, one leg over the arm of his chair, smoking a large black cigar and sipping scotch, you would hardly have suspected that not so long ago he had plodded the pavement outside trying front doors and keeping the cabbies in order. Judging from his fastidious appearance, his hair carefully parted in the middle, the small red mustache waxed up at the ends, the manicured nails, and the single ring on his finger, where reposed a large diamond in a nest of sapphires, you might have thought him a rich horseman or an agent for automobiles. He had even succeeded in beating away the rough edges of his address and spoke smoothly, rarely

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forgetting his grammar, and occasionally venturing timorously on the borders of the broad "a."

Heberton Wade knew Harrity, for the Inspector had made it a point to be introduced to him one day at the Belmont Park Club House between the races. So the men met cordially as acquaintances.

"A servant has walked off with some of Lady Victoria's wedding presents, I presume," said the Inspector with quiet confidence, placing a chair by his desk for the visitor and settling himself to listen.

"Precisely," Wade responded. "The theft is on a little larger scale, though, and to tell the truth there is not much hope of ever catching the criminals."

Harrity swung around in his chair, smiling softly, as he eyed the wall before him. "We have just landed the Whyo gang who stole the Konigstein jewels," he said.

"Splendid!" returned the Captain. "But I fear that the Whyo gang will be child's play compared with the Advanced Robberies Company, Limited."

Hearing that name, Harrity made no sign of surprise, but leaned back in his chair and studied the ceiling. "Ah!" he said musingly. "The Advanced Robberies Company, Limited. That has a twist in it that scents of the Hell's Kitchen crowd.

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Them fel-lows have a pen-shent for fancy names. But what is the value of the property stolen?"

"According to the statement presented to me by the director of the crime on the day before he left my house, \$121,500 worth of wedding presents were taken," Wade answered pleasantly. "That is the valuation, of course, made by the company's appraiser."

Inspector Harrity's chair rolled around very slowly until his eyes were focussed on the quiet face of his visitor. He spoke gently. "Captain Wade, you have been ill, I believe, confined to your house by appendisightus."

"I have been confined to my house by the Advanced Robberies Company, Limited," rejoined Wade, with emphasis on every word. To prove his perfect health he drew from his case two very long, strong cigars, and, handing one to the detective, began smoking the other nonchalantly.

Harrity rolled back to his old attitude of easy attention, taking up a pencil to make casual notes.

"Well, let us hear the whole story, then," he said, puffing thoughtfully at the excellent weed.

So Wade proceeded to give him the facts of his captivity in great detail, omitting, of course, those complications which had arisen over Georgianna Cowles and Amy Arden. He began with the day Morton, the butler, appeared in his house; he told

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how he was seized by his servants and bound, how Arden had aroused his sense of honor and held him prisoner by his mere word; he set forth the theory of useless rubbish, and explained the plan to apply intellect to crime with a philanthropic motive; he exposed the fiction of his engagement to Lady Victoria Glyme and showed how easily it had worked such large profits for its authors. One important fact only did Wade withhold, and that was the name of von Kohlberg, for he had learned it through the innocence of Amy Arden, and he would let no fault of hers bring trouble to this German, in whose good motives he no longer had any doubt. A half-hour was taken up with this exposition of the crime. The Captain spoke slowly, that the listener might make notes. He was simple, direct, and clear, for he was at pains that the detective should comprehend the unusual intricacies of the case and have some realization of its import to the whole world.

"And now, Inspector, I feel it my duty to turn the entire matter over to you," he said in conclusion.

Harrity swung around very deliberately and facing Wade regarded him intently for a moment. Then his gaze followed a spire of smoke ceiling-ward. "Do you believe all this?" he asked.

"Absolutely," replied the Captain with firmness.

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"I believe in the Robberies Company's existence, in its theory, and in the rightness of its cause. If you, acting according to the ideas of the time, can run down these men as criminals, well and good. It would be but a ripple in the current. For myself, all I wish to know is the names of those who sent presents to my house and their value, that I may compensate them for their loss. As to the rest I have no care. You have all the facts that I can give you, with a description of the personal appearance of the men. A so-called crime has been committed, and in the arrest of these thieves is your opportunity to become immortal."

The Inspector was not excited by the prospect. "Edward Arden—an alias, of course. It sounds like one Gentleman Pete would adopt, but he is doing time now for a Texas oil swindle. He might have turned a trick like this." Harrity swung around to the directory on the small table by his desk, and Wade, contemplating the back of the natty blue uniform, smiled broadly. "There are seven Edward Ardens here," came in the even voice. "Five of them are actors, one is a plumber, and one a stevedore. But the name used by your butler is an alias, of course. We shall have a look through the gallery, Captain; you may recognize some of them fel-lows there." The Inspector was smiling, too, at the directory. As he faced his

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visitor again his expression was one of deep thought.

"It is useless to look through the Rogues' Gallery," Wade said, waving a hand impatiently. "If there is any place you should search it is the courts of Europe."

Harry could not repress a sarcastic twitch of the lip and a shrug of the shoulder. "You think so. By the way, you was saying, Captain, that you went out walking every night. Why didn't you call a policeman?"

"I was on my word of honor not to," was the answer, given with some heat.

"Ah! yes—yes." The Inspector studied the ceiling.

"I fear that you do not realize what this company means, the full purport of its theory, and the danger to society as now constituted," said Wade.

"The theory of useless rubbish," mused the Inspector, turning to his notes. "An absurd idea, Captain, foolish! It will never do no damage, I assure you, sir." Firm in his conviction, the detective held out his hand so that the light fell upon the diamond and the sapphires. He paused to contemplate them lovingly. "The diamond, Captain, is the emblem of civilization, of refinement, of culture. It is the appreciation of the beautiful that makes us better than the animals, and just as long

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as we have education we will wear jewelry. You have been to the opera. Useless rubbish! Why, sir, them stones represent nearly a year of my work, a whole year of arduous labor."

"And a year of wasted time," retorted Wade in a cutting voice, his mind reverting to Arden's contention that the mania for the unnecessities pervaded not one class but all, and that snobbery was an attendant mental affliction and just as widespread. "Perhaps they represent also the death of some poor devil of a Kaffir in the Rand mines."

"D—n the Kaffir!" exclaimed the detective fervently.

"Precisely," was the quiet rejoinder. "But see here, Inspector, while we discuss philosophy we are forgetting work."

"It is necessary to know first where we stand," Harrity returned grandly. "I mentioned them ideas of mine just to demonstrate that as far as this gang of crooks may go with its theory, you needn't worry about the world. The more education we get the more we will have of this here stuff that you call useless rubbish. The mere necessities cawhn't be all of life. It is those very unnecessities, what you speak of, that gives us something to work for and enjoy, and occupy ourselves with. Cawhn't you see that?" The Arden theory was so plainly absurd to the Inspector that it could have

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weight only in a disordered mind. He regarded Wade quizzically. "To get down to business—the first thing for the po-lice to find out is was the presents actually stolen; that settled, we must find out who stole them, and we can probably run them down through the pawnshops, where they are sure to be hocked. Suppose you give me a description of some of them."

"If I had a description of these presents and the names of the senders, I doubt very much if I should have come here," said Wade. "As I have already told you, I never saw a single one."

The detective had never had much doubt about the real facts in this case. His patience, his close attention, his waste of valuable time, were a recognition of the social position of his visitor. He could not repress a glance of pity, however; then returned to his notes, his main reliance in maintaining his self-control.

"Think," he said kindly, without looking up. "Cawhn't you mind one?"

Puzzling over the problem of the wedding presents, Wade had not found much reason to hope that the police would be of great assistance to him in settling with the victims of the crime, but he had believed that his statement would raise a furor in the town; it might cost him his reputation for common sense, but the world would have fair warning.

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Now he saw little chance of arousing the sleepers through this medium. To the Inspector his whole story was incredible and admitted of but one explanation. He was blocked. Arden must have studied this man and taken account of him in his plan. He must have foreseen this very interview, with Heberton Wade, one of the best-known men in New York, and the celebrated detective Harrity regarding each other politely as simple idiots, yet afraid to speak their minds. The Captain tried to recall the expression on the Doctor's face at those times when he had so boldly asked his prisoner to give the police the full facts. Surely he had seen the ironical twitch of the mouth and the laughing light in the eyes then. Of course he had; Wade laughed out heartily. It seemed a senseless burst of merriment to the Inspector, and satisfied him as to the correctness of his conclusions.

"Cawn't you remember a single present?" he asked, raising his voice to insistence.

"I remember two," Wade answered, becoming serious once more. "One was from Mr. Flynn, the Nevada miner, a tiara of diamonds worth \$10,000, and the other a pearl thingumbob, valued at \$5,000, sent by my friend Mr. James Rollins."

"Rollins?" Harrity's face brightened. "Ah—yes—he's a friend of mine, too. I dined with him just last night at Delmonico's. A very interesting

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fel-low—a great astronomer and all that. Pardon me.”

The Inspector rose. Wade was beside him, all eager with interest.

“An astronomer!” he cried. “Jim Rollins an astronomer! Tell me, Inspector, did he talk much about humanity?”

“Pardon me,” was the reply, and the Captain was pushed into his chair with gentle force. “Kindly allow me to do a little telephoning.”

He left the room, and for ten minutes Wade was alone. The puzzle of the presents was still to be solved, but to the Captain it was secondary to the marvellous workings of the great crime. In two points only had the company failed in its foresight. It had allowed Amy Arden to come to his house and reveal the Baron’s identity, which might have proved a grave mistake, but his own regard for the girl had corrected that. Then the reporter of the *Abend Zeitung* had been left out of account. Recalling the persistent and philosophical little German, he was filled with anxiety lest much trouble might come from that humble quarter. In the attitude of the police, Wade saw a hint that the company’s plan did not really include the publicity which it had seemed to welcome so fearlessly, but long secrecy was impossible, for the missing presents were a menace. Would the company ac-

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count for them, without disclosing the facts behind his mythical engagement? There was reason now to hope for that, but Arden could never have figured with that *Abend Zeitung* man in his equation. Rollins would know—Rollins was studying astronomy! He would go to Jim and have the way made clear. Determined on this, Wade sprang from his chair, and paced up and down the room, impatient to leave. He had not long to wait. Harrity, returning, leaned against his desk and eyed him very quietly.

"I think we had better say nothing about this affair, Inspector," Wade said carelessly.

"That is my own opinion, Captain," returned Harrity in a fatherly tone. "My first idea was that it would make a good funny story for the reporters, but since I have talked with my friend Mr. Rollins, I have changed my mind—we had best remain silent. I called Mr. Flynn on the 'phone and he tells me that the tie-ara come back——"

"Thank Heaven!" Wade sank into a chair. He could not speak. He could only laugh—laugh uproariously.

"You must not excite yourself," said the Inspector in a soothing tone, patting him on the shoulder. "You must remember that you have been very ill." When the Captain was looking up at him wide-eyed, smiling, but calm, he went on

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solemnly. "The tie-ara come back last night with a polite note from your secretary. Mr. Flynn says, by the way, that he is coming down to see you, and does not want you to feel in the least embarrassed by the incident. Well, then I got my friend Mr. Rollins on the wire, and he informs me that the pearl collar is now in his hands. He tells me, furthermore, that he has positive knowledge that all the five hundred presents was returned yesterday, by your own servants, and by your own orders, sir."

The great crime was settled to the mind of Inspector Harrity.

Wade rose and gave the detective a hearty shake of the hand. "I am much indebted to you," he said. "If ever I can be of any service to you let me know. Good-by."

"Ah, Captain!" the Inspector had almost forgotten, but caught his departing visitor at the door. "Mr. Rollins asked me particular to tell you that he hoped for the quick coming of that day when you would have right understanding."

"And he is studying astronomy, too," said Wade in a far-away voice. "Good day, Inspector."

Even the *Abend Zeitung* man was forgotten now. He thought only of Amy and the company, as with rapid strides he left the building.

Harrity picked up the breakfast edition of the

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Evening Earth, lighted a fresh cigar, and strolled into the outer office. He paused before the desk and studied the great headline that spread across the top of the sheet.

"Sergeant," he said meditatively, "it is peculiar, ain't it, how when there is so many millions of extra women in the world a man will lose his mind about just one?" He tossed away the paper and leaned against the rail thinking. "By the way!" The Inspector looked up sharply as he spoke. "There has been too many fruit stands broke into lately. We must keep a closer watch on Hell's Kitchen."

CHAPTER XIX

WOMAN AND THE COMPANY

THE unfortunate affair of Georgianna Cowles was now uppermost in the mind of Heberton Wade. As he went uptown in his car with all possible speed to settle it, he was conscious that he was approaching this untutored girl with growing nervousness. Much more easily in a like situation could he have confronted Amy Arden, whose charm was her seriousness, through which broke at times flashes of unconscious humor. But Georgianna was nimble-witted, with a temper that matched the red gold of her hair; she was as light as the air, and in her moods as uncertain as the winds; she was likely to take the whole affair as a joke or to crush him with the dignity of her twenty years. That day when he proposed to her he had been honest and fixed in his purpose. Now, however he explained the events that followed, he must appear a foolish, trifling old bachelor. He could not tell her about the company and its crime, which accounted for his failure to appear at the park that fatal Tuesday. Were that possible she

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might regard him as had Inspector Harrity. Convincing her of the truth of his story there was Amy Arden, and he could never justify himself with Georgianna by declaring that five days after he had avowed his intention of trying to love her, he had found the one woman, that one whom all men watch for and a few find. It was a terrible problem, and the nearer he came to the moment that it must be faced, the farther he seemed from any really good way of solving it. If the girl had not gone to the park that day he would never have been in this distressful situation, but he had wooed better than he thought in his manner so businesslike. Gladly would Wade have turned and made his intended flight to Europe without seeing her again, but he dared not. What he was going to say when he saw her he did not know, even at that moment when he stood in the drawing-room and she was before him.

It was rather early in the afternoon for a call, being hardly past lunch time, but after what Georgianna had been reading in the papers regarding Captain Wade, she was prepared for any eccentricity. She greeted him so radiantly that he was taken back, and for the moment could not speak, but stood regarding her woodenly. The best that he had expected was the cold dignity that he deserved, but she gave him a cheery welcome, and

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stare as he might he saw that her smiling face masked nothing.

"Miss Cowles," he began, after an embarrassing minute of silence, "I have come to apologize and explain about this whole miserable affair."

Georgianna's face became grave. "I am so sorry for you," she said, "but, of course, I did not like to speak about it." Why Wade should come to her, of all people, for sympathy, Georgianna did not see, but she wanted to be good to him, though she did have a very decided opinion as to his weak character. He remained silent, astonished at the consideration he was meeting. She added in a burst of desperation: "But there must be others in the world with whom you can be just as happy. I notice men always recover—sometimes very quickly." Her nose went up slightly.

"You must have thought it strange," said he.

"The breaking of the engagement?" asked the girl sweetly, letting her wits get the better of her good intentions, and tilting her head as she watched him out of the corners of her eyes.

"Heavens—no!" returned Wade with a gesture of despair. "You don't suppose I came here to talk about that infernal Lady Victoria Glyme?"

"Well, what else was there to talk about?" said Georgianna, in a voice of surprise. "What else

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could you have come for? I was trying to be nice. I thought you wanted sympathy."

"Honestly, you are the last person in the world to whom I should come for sympathy about Lady Victoria," said he.

"Perhaps you came to sympathize with me then about that infernal Lady Victoria Glyme?" Georgianna was laughing softly.

Wade did not join in her merriment, but spoke with earnestness. "Miss Cowles, I realize how fearfully absurd I must look to you in announcing my engagement to Lady Victoria Glyme two days after that unfortunate Monday——"

"When you asked me to marry you," said the untutored girl, her face now very grave.

"Can't you see that I am trying to explain something for which there is no explanation?" exclaimed the Captain, with pathos in look and gesture.

"I see it," Georgianna answered, nodding her head in emphasis. Her good heart got the better of her wits, and she spoke softly. "Can't you see how strange this all is to me? I have always liked you very much, Captain Wade, and never more than on that unfortunate Monday—you were so kind then—and I liked you better than ever, but it never entered my head that I could marry you. And I was surprised to read on Wednesday that

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you were engaged to Lady Victoria, and I was angry with you, very angry. Of course, I remembered that you didn't care for me, that what you offered was sort of a business deal with hopes, yet you did seem very hasty in changing your partnership arrangements. You seemed so trifling. Then the only explanation I could give was that Lady Victoria had refused you and that you had come to me in what is commonly called the rebound."

If Heberton Wade had ever in his heart curses for the Robberies Company and its theory, it was at that moment as he sat studying his shoes.

"Tell me," said Georgianna suddenly, "is Lady Victoria really fifty-seven?"

"So I understand," he answered, looking up, half-smiling, half-frowning. "I only wish you could understand that back of all this there is something that I could explain and yet can't."

"Certainly," was the gentle rejoinder. "I believe you. Jim was saying just yesterday that I must not be surprised at anything done by a man who could go crazy over a woman twenty years older——"

"Hang Jim!" exclaimed Wade fervently.

"Jim is your truest friend on earth," retorted Georgianna, with fire in her eyes. "He told me yesterday that he was going to do his best to

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bring you to a right understanding. He said that the day was not far off— Why, what is the matter? ”

Wade had arisen and stepping toward the girl with hands outstretched, a broad smile on his face, he cried, “ Jim Rollins said that? ”

“ Why, yes,” returned Georgianna, her blue eyes full of trouble, she felt so sorry now for her old friend. “ Why, what is the matter? ”

“ Jim will explain the unexplainable,” laughed Wade.

“ I don’t understand.”

“ Look here, Georgianna,” Wade said in a big, brotherly tone, “ don’t you remember that when I proposed that business deal with hopes, as you call it, you were to ride with me next day if you had even any idea of considering it? Well, don’t you realize how I felt when I knew that you had driven down to the Plaza to meet me, that——”

“ I didn’t!” cried Georgianna angrily, rising, confronting him with her face all ablaze, and her hands clenched and quivering. “ I never dreamed of such a thing. I never——”

“ Well, who was the red—I mean the auburn-haired girl, that rode away on the roan horse then? ” demanded the astonished Captain.

“ My sister Caroline has red hair,” replied Georgianna in an icy voice. “ She rode my horse that

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morning with Joe. Can't you tell me from Caroline?"

"But I was not there to meet you," returned Wade. "I could not get there. That was the trouble. That was what has worried me all these weeks."

"You need never have worried," the girl retorted cuttingly.

The light was beginning to break, and she sat down again and looked up at the man, almost smiling. "Who told you that I was there?"

"Albert."

"Albert—and who is Albert?"

"The polo-playing astronomer."

"Captain Wade, I positively believe you have gone crazy."

"I mean a servant in my house, and I would give all I have to know who he is. You see, he telephoned to the Netherland that day——"

Georgianna was laughing. "I see," she said. "But really, you needn't have taken even that trouble. Lady Victoria is still unexplained. I suppose the polo-playing astronomer announced the engagement?"

"Helped to," Wade rejoined grimly. "But this news about your sister eases my mind greatly. As to the rest I will make Jim Rollins relieve me of further responsibility."

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Georgianna rose. Her face was flushed, but she was smiling. "Jim has already relieved you," she said. "You know we are engaged."

"Thank God!" cried Wade.

Georgianna stepped back from him, erect, her eyes flashing, her lips set, her hands clenched, and stared.

"This is the best news I have had in years," said the Captain. "Don't be angry with me, Georgianna." He was so serious, so earnest in his appeal, that the girl softened just a little. "Of course you have a right to think me crazy, fickle, trifling, whatever you will, but, believe me, I am not so mad as I appear. I am glad for you and glad for Jim, and some day the unexplainable will be explained. To-morrow I sail for Europe on the *Baltic* in search of right understanding. Jim will make it all clear to you and you will believe him."

Georgianna took his hand. "I believe you, now," she said softly. She regarded him one moment much perplexed, then added: "I do so hope you find what you are in search of."

Wade paused at the door and looked back at the girl, still standing watching him intently.

"I will find it," he said. "Good-by."

The puzzled expression did not leave Georgianna's face, for I found it there still late that same afternoon.

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"Jim," she said, "Captain Wade is the strangest man I ever met. How could he think of marrying a woman of fifty-seven, and why should the breaking of such an engagement affect his mind?"

"Wade is a sane man," I answered, "and as square as ever lived. Some day I will explain everything to you—but I can't now."

"Well, I do hope I shall not have to wait long," she returned with a sigh.

But Georgianna's opinion of him was no longer a matter of worry to Heberton Wade, so firm was his belief that in time I should set him right. He left her house with a lightened heart, for now he was free to start out in search of the company. Everything was turning out surprisingly well. The problem of the wedding and the presents was settled forever, and with the exception of the few Germans who read the *Abend Zeitung*, no one would know but what the whole story of Lady Victoria Glyme was true. Believing it, they would certainly think it strange that he had ever become involved in an affair with a woman of her years and a worker in the Salvation Army, and they would certainly congratulate him on his good fortune in being well out of it. The opinion of the world was no longer of any moment to him, for it was the same world whose judgment Arden had taught him to pity. By great good fortune his attentions to Geor-

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gianna Cowles had not fanned into life the divine spark, as once he had hoped and then feared, and he had no further call of honor there, for Jim Rollins had settled that. The company had settled it! Jim was of the company. That was all that could be meant by these two messages so cunningly sent through the obtuse Harrity and the innocent girl. He would see Jim next. That was his thought as he shot away from the Cowles house in his car. When they had turned into Fifth Avenue, he ordered the chauffeur to cross to Madison, where he could find a telephone. Thus it happened that I made an engagement to meet him at his house at six o'clock, and he found himself at Eighty-seventh Street with several hours on his hands.

"If I only knew something of asymptotes," he thought, as he stood by the machine wondering what he would do next.

It was a fine crisp winter afternoon. He did not want to go back to his lonely house, where there was only old Harris tottering around packing his trunks for to-morrow's sailing. He did not care to go to a club at a time when the men would be dropping in by the scores, for they would try to greet him after his long absence as though nothing had been happening and he had not been making a fool of himself over the aged Lady Victoria. So he decided that he would walk home, and dismissing

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the chauffeur, strolled leisurely over to the avenue and downtown. At Eighty-third Street he paused a moment to watch several men raise a horse that had fallen on the icy pavement. It is these little incidents that often change the whole course of our lives. Standing by the curb, carelessly watching this trivial scene, the Captain's gaze wandered to the museum over the street. He had passed it hundreds of times on his way uptown, or riding in the park, but not in years had he entered the doors. Now it appealed to him. It was just the place that a man like Arden would loaf in, picking up some stray facts about pictures or mummies; where Francis would wander to study some curio from the East, or Albert sit pondering over strange equations. It offered him more than an entangled horse or the empty avenue, and if he wearied of marbles, paintings, and armor, he could find some quiet corner to rest a while and think, far out of the ken of reporters and solicitous friends. So he went in, and for a time wandered aimlessly about the lower floors, looking vaguely at statues, for his thoughts were far away and would not fix themselves on cold stone. He climbed the broad stairs, and soon sank down on a bench before a Rembrandt. Any one seeing him might have thought him studying its every detail, so intense was his gaze, but he did not see it at all. He was thinking of Amy and of

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the company, but only as it would lead him to her; for humanity he had now no care. She was before him, off there in the dim distances, smiling, beckoning, and he reached out his hand and whispered her name.

"Mamma," came a small, piping voice beside him, "what's that man talking to himself about?"

Wade looked around angrily. At his side sat a weary little woman, almost buried under an enormous hat, gay with vari-colored trimmings, that flashed to his mind the theory of Arden. Resting against her knee was a chubby-faced boy whose black eyes were fixed on him with fascination.

"Excuse him, sir," said the mother in a tone of vexation. "Theodore don't know no better. You see, I want to look at pickters and I can't leave him at home, and I don't have a minute's peace except in the mummy department. Theodore McManus, ask the gentleman's pardon."

Wade took the fat little hand and held it in friendly fashion. "You spoiled a picture for me, Theodore," he said pleasantly, "but I forgive you."

"I want to see the mummies," the boy whimpered, rubbing an eye with his free fist.

Wade arose. It was by another of those unaccountable impulses that mark so much of the course of a man's life. Sometimes he must wonder what

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would have happened to him, whither his years would have run, had it not been first for the falling horse and then for Theodore McManus. For taking a firm hold on the chubby hand he said: "Come, we shall see the mummies, you and I. Perhaps you will go with us, madam."

The woman took one look at the handsome man with a pleasant face. "Deed and double I will," she said. "But I ain't used to being showed around by gentlemen I don't know."

"My name is Wade," was the laughing return.

"Land sakes alive!" Mrs. McManus had her boy's other hand now, and the three were moving to the stairs. "It must be the Captain sure. I thought I recognized you from your pickters. You know, I've been reading about you every day regular." Her voice became softer. "And I felt so bad this morning, Captain, so sorry when I read in the *Earth* how that Lady Victoria had treated you. There's only one woman a man can rely on never to cause him trouble and that's his widdier."

Heberton Wade was enjoying life now thoroughly, and he received this sympathy with the good heart that it merited. "Madam, I appreciate kindly feelings, but if you value my friendship you will avoid a subject so painful to me."

"I won't mention it again," said Mrs. McManus,

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"but it does make me indignant, now we are actually acquainted, to think of that woman of fifty-seven throwing down so nice a gentleman."

And she did not revert to the painful subject, but nevertheless it was in the eyes that followed Wade's every movement as he stood before the glass cases explaining to Theodore all that he knew about mummies. He was astonished at his own ignorance of so interesting a subject, and thought of what Arden would have unfolded to him were they together in this same place. Facts soon failed him, and he had recourse to his imagination. His imagination delighted the lad more than his facts, for he put life in this musty figure, and made it a man thousands of years ago on the banks of the Nile, shooting crocodiles, elephants, lions, tigers; indeed, he drew on the world for his supply of animals and pictured Egypt a jungle where wandered every beast from the polar bear to the kangaroo. There in that case was a woman who must have been in the court of the Pharaoh that Moses knew; she wore a hat like Theodore's mother, yes, just as pretty, with a big red bow and plumes, but her gown would be white, and kind of loose and hangy, and she carried an umbrella, too, for the sun was very hot around the pyramids. Theodore suggested that maybe her husband ran a trolley car, but he heard that that was hardly likely, though

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the man might have driven one of the public chariots drawn by——

“Your Egyptology is much more interesting than my father’s.”

Wade knew the voice. He turned sharply.

“Miss Arden!” he cried. “I thought you had gone.”

“Why, no,” she said, giving him her hand. “I was to have sailed Wednesday, but changed. We leave on the *Kronprinz* to-morrow. Please go on with your lecture. I have been quite entertained by your picture of early Egypt.”

“I think that Theodore has had enough of mummies,” laughed Wade. “Good-by, Mrs. McManus.”

“Well, ain’t that like men,” said the good woman, grasping her boy firmly, and staring at the two figures in retreat. “Never satisfied with one trouble.”

But Wade had no troubles now. He had forgotten them all. Amy Arden was found, was at his side, walking with him down the avenue, and there were miles before them, three miles of the street, and to-morrow three thousand more of ocean. These last he did not mention, but was at pains to make her understand that he would not leave New York for years, and if he did not see her father again he hoped that she would explain that he had

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given up all idea of going abroad this winter. Amy suggested that they turn right back, as she had left Dr. Arden in the museum.

"He is always poking around looking for masterpieces," she explained. "He thinks there are several in the Metropolitan by unknown men, works that have been condemned by the critics and are stuck away in corners. There is nothing so hard on the feet as pictures and I left him there, intending to walk back to the hotel. Coming down the stairs, I saw you delivering the most interesting lecture on Egypt I ever heard."

"It was a blessed moment when I found the McManuses and took them to the mummy department," laughed Wade.

What a great life this is! All things are working together for good for him. He has found the great company and the men who are playing a game that is worth while. The crime that threatened him so much evil has brought only good fortune. Georgianna has refused him. And here he is walking on this brightest and briskest of days with Amy Arden. His step is strong and springy. His mood is the merriest. Rather strange for a man just back from the borders of death and matrimony! So the girl thinks. But the last is a subject to which she cannot refer, though she is busy recalling his strange aversion to the mention of

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Lady Victoria Glyme on those nights at dinner. As for Wade he has forgotten it entirely.

"Is it very far to the Holland House?" Amy asked, when they had passed the tenth block. "You know you really ought not to do too much."

"It is no distance at all," the Captain answered easily. "If you don't mind it—for me, I could keep on to Kamchatka."

"You are a strange man," the girl said. "I leave you one day an invalid, and almost the next find you wandering around galleries and taking long walks. But I didn't know that you cared for mummies and pictures and all those tiresome things."

"Tiresome?" said Wade, "and you the daughter of Edward Arden."

"Yes, tiresome," Amy answered firmly. "You see, you don't understand. You live a normal life, and do the ordinary things that anybody can do, and don't meet educated people all the time."

"You think I am ignorant?" retorted Wade, with some fire.

"Not that," the girl said with a laugh. "I mean you are just like everybody else—that is why I have liked you so much. But think of poor me—I spend nearly all my life in a convent and then when I get out have to be constantly meeting these dreadful men who are depressingly learned, men who

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know everything and do everything from running air-ships to polar expeditions. They take me in to dinner and when I want to talk about nothing at all, they go wandering off into metaphysics and astronomy and mathematics and——”

“The good of humanity,” interrupted Wade.

“Yes, the good of humanity,” said Amy, growing very serious. “Father and some of his friends have the most foolish theories about property. You have heard them. Why, any woman can refute them completely.”

“Yes—that is true,” Wade said. “But, Miss Arden, I believe in——”

“Don’t tell me that,” cried Amy frowning. “I should be so disappointed in you if I found that you were like all the rest. The kind of a man to appeal to a thorough woman is one who slams the front door and has a step and a voice that she can hear all over the house; who if he has money is thinking only how to spend it, and if he has none, thinks only how to make it. Now that is simple truth.”

“You astonish me, Miss Arden,” said Wade, searching her face for some sign of dissembling, but finding it only beautifully grave. “Now to my mind the most interesting of men would be—say Baron von Kohlberg.”

“Friedrich?” Amy smiled. “Well, of all the

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men I know he is the finest and the most tiresome."

"The great von Kohlberg?" cried Wade, his thoughts running back to the little *Abend Zeitung* reporter and the glow of his face at the very mention of that name.

"Yes—the great von Kohlberg," responded the girl. "He is a man that a woman admires."

She emphasized that last word so that Wade asked quickly, "Admires only?"

"Yes. She could follow him into battle sooner than into a church."

"But he thinks like Kant, he writes music like Wagner, and is the finest soldier in the army!"

"True. And if he did only one of those things, he would be splendid. But he is appalling—positively appalling. He does not know how to waste time pleasantly. He must always be doing something. For five years now Friedrich has been coming to our house at Chantilly, and when I want to chatter about nothing, he must be analyzing my mind, composing something on the piano, or working out with sticks a new army manoeuvre."

"And the polo-playing astronomer—your father's friend."

"I never heard of him. He certainly does not sound attractive."

"Nor of the learned Orientalist and wrestler?"

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"No. Father would delight in a man like that. Anything odd pleases him. Of all his close friends I like M. de Marsay best—he can cook such delicious things on the chafing-dish."

"Andre!" cried Wade. "Andre de Marsay."

"Why, do you know him?" exclaimed the girl, in a voice of delight.

"No. But I have heard of him. He reads widely—from Pascal to Anatole France."

"But he only talks about Anatole."

"And he goes up in air-ships, of course."

"Yes—he won the Paris-to-London race last year. Besides, he writes very pretty verses."

"How I should like to meet Andre! Of all your father's friends, Miss Arden, he appeals to me most."

"When you do come abroad you shall meet him," the girl said simply. "You must run out to Chantilly, and then, I think, you will understand why I was so relieved when I stood behind you in the gallery and found that after all you knew nothing about mummies. I should have been so disappointed to have left New York thinking that one of the few nice ordinary men I had ever met, one who was a good horseman and a sailor, and danced well, was after all an Egyptologist too."

In Wade's serious face there was no trace of merriment, though he was laughing within. As

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they went on he spoke boastingly of his own ignorance till Amy Arden, pressing her muff against her face and tilting her head so he saw but one bright eye, inquired whether or not he could read. A little, he answered, but of all people he most abhorred John Locke, Gentleman; he told her of his efforts to master those four pages on ideas, and how he had failed so miserably—so happily! he added, lowering his voice and regarding her very intently. She kept her muff to her face, for the sharp wind was sweeping over the Plaza, and she quickened her pace. Neither spoke for a while. Wade was thinking of Arden and his refusal to explain to his daughter about the company, its great theory, and its crimes. The Doctor measured a woman's mind as keenly as a man's. He had said that the love of a woman would never qualify a man for the company, and now the Captain realized that being in the company would never win for a man the love of a woman. Wade had two things to fight for. His mind was made up that he would join in that game which for its danger, its mystery, its humor, its pathos, and its greatness of purpose made even war seem child's play. His heart was made up, too, and it must act first.

"Let us cross over to Madison Avenue," he said suddenly. "It is quieter there."

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"I like the crowd," Amy answered. "But, I suppose, the noise gets on your nerves."

"Since I have been ill, I have to be very careful," Wade returned as he guided her through the tangle of carriages. "There is no use in our walking so fast—I am beginning to feel the fatigue."

"Perhaps we had better take a car," suggested his companion with concern.

He would not hear of it. They were in the peace of Fifty-sixth Street, moving slowly, the Captain for the time silent. He was on the edge of very deep water, poised ready for the plunge, yet afraid. They reached the corner and turned, and three more blocks were passed before he could begin.

"Miss Arden," he said in a low voice, "I can't tell you how happy I am to have found you again. You have been on my mind for days, and when you went away last Monday without my seeing you, I felt terrible. You got my message?"

"Oh, yes," answered Amy. "And I was very sorry that I was not to see you again—you had been so very kind. But then when I did not sail on Wednesday I knew I should have an opportunity of thanking you for being so good to us. To tell the truth, it was partly on your account that I did not sail, and Father was awfully put out."

"On my account?" Wade exclaimed, his face lighting with hope.

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"There were two reasons," the girl answered quietly. "One was Friedrich. He was going over on the same steamer, and was to take care of me, but I simply put my foot down and said that I would not be bored to death for six days with discussions of metaphysics and the wave-lengths of the sea and the movements of the planets."

"And the other reason?" asked Wade gently.

"I did so want to be at your wedding," she answered simply.

Wade stopped. In that delightful walk, side by side with Amy Arden, all things had seemed to be working good for him; he had forgotten the mythical romance; he had seen only the days before him which she at each step had filled fuller with promise by her horror of learning and her pleasure at his own ignorance, so absurd, yet so womanly. Now arose Lady Victoria. Yesterday he had laughed at the thought of her. To-day she was no longer a myth. She was a horrible reality, a real wraith that dogged his footsteps and threatened to haunt him for life. He must break from her.

"Amy," he exclaimed, "can't you see that there never was to be any wedding; that there never was any Lady Victoria; that all those evenings when you talked of her I was thinking only of you? Can't you see——"

"I see that we are in a very public place, Cap-

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tain Wade," said the girl sharply. "People are staring. We must go back to Fifth Avenue."

She turned into Fifty-third Street, and quickened her pace, her figure erect, her eyes straight in front, marching right soldierly.

"Miss Arden." Wade got no sign that she even heard him, but he would not stop now. "You misunderstand. I have never seen Lady Victoria Glyme in my life. For all I know she may not exist. The whole story of my engagement was a monstrous fraud."

Amy halted.

"And who worked this great fraud?" she asked, looking him right in the eye.

Wade was silent, but he did not bend to her gaze.

She turned and beckoned a passing hansom.

"Who worked the fraud?" she said with insistence.

"I did," the man answered grimly.

She sprang into the cab, and it bowled away with her.

Wade stood watching till it swung out of sight. Amy Arden had gone from him again—but at least not into the air, to nowhere!

CHAPTER XX

AT SEA

FOR three days the Wade-Glyme fiasco was the feature of the New York papers. The afternoon editions of that Friday when the Captain issued his statement were able to make a great display, for while facts were few, pictures were plentiful, speculation unlimited, and the history of the courtship, the engagement, and the persons concerned, revamped, made columns. The papers of Saturday and Sunday mornings had a splendid showing. Then a murder mystery, a man's dead body in a cab, became of prime interest, and on Monday our romance was lost on the inside pages. It might have been lost forever but for the German reporter, who sat so patiently that cold day on the fireplug, reading Richter and watching. There happened to be employed in the proofroom of the *Standard* a German-American, and, as he sat down to his work on Monday afternoon, he remarked carelessly to his foreman that the *Abend Zeitung* had printed a remarkable story last Friday. He produced a tattered copy of the little

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paper, and on hearing the translation of a few lines, the foreman decided that the grotesque explanation of the Wade affair might amuse the city editor. The headline in particular—"Eine Neue Philosophie: Die Grosse Entdeckung von Capitan Heberton Wade"—was strikingly characteristic. The city editor laughed heartily, but his curiosity to hear more was sufficiently aroused for him to send for the German proofreader to explain the entire article. And so the whole town was set agog again.

The *Abend Zeitung* reporter did his work well. He found a charm in the philosophical side of the affair and made that the great feature of his three-column story. The remarkable crime in the Gramercy Park house was secondary to his exposition of the Arden theory of useless rubbish. He traced that theory back to the simple conception in the minds of many wise men that all property was at the foundation of the world's trouble; then he showed how Dr. Arden had seized the old idea and presented it in a new and practical form by the addition of the simple word "useless." The actual existence of the company was next taken up and hailed with joy, and while the explanation of the relation of the philanthropy to the Wade-Glyme fraud was somewhat hazy, as the reporter explained it, his verbatim interview with the Cap-

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tain, which he had taken so carefully, made it clear. Absurd as the story seemed to the editors of the *Standard*, it was deemed worth while to send the great Moseley down to police headquarters to learn whether or not Heberton Wade had been to see Harrity, as was stated in the *Abend Zeitung*, and if so, what he said. In an hour Mr. Moseley reported over the telephone in a melancholy voice that he stood by his own story of Saturday morning, but was ready to add that Captain Wade was crazy; with great reluctance the Inspector had admitted that Wade spent an hour with him on Friday, and had told practically the same tale as was given in the *Abend Zeitung*; but Harrity further expressed his profound conviction that the abrupt termination of the love affair had affected the Captain's mind, and his friend, Mr. James Rollins, was of the same opinion. One-half the *Standard* staff were at once put on the case, five men being assigned to find Captain Wade and three more sent after Mr. Rollins. Both had disappeared. The Gramercy Park house was in charge of a caretaker; Marlowe, Jennings & Marlowe had no information about their client, but said on his behalf that the whole story was a silly lie; his clubs had not seen him since he was first taken ill. In the meantime, the cable was set to working to find out who had been responsible for

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the statements abroad regarding the engagement. The London papers had never given the affair more than a paragraph, as the marriage of an aged Salvation Army worker to an American was not of much importance, but the *Standard's* correspondent succeeded in tracing the corroboration to the Hon. Arthur Glyme, Lady Victoria's half-brother, and the full brother of the Earl of Garchester. The Hon. Arthur had disappeared. The editors began to see that something had occurred, but their position was difficult. To say that Herberton Wade had gone out of his head might prove libellous. To treat his story seriously would bring Dr. Edward Arden after them with a damage suit. The disappearance of the Hon. Arthur Glyme, and Lady Victoria's age, occupation, and residence, with the Captain's solemn denial of the engagement, gave color to the belief that a fraud had actually been perpetrated. Then the return of \$121,000 worth of wedding presents showed plainly that robbery could not be the motive.

The *Standard* had a great beat on Tuesday, a whole page that in its construction was a marvellous work of the editor's art. No mention was made of the *Abend Zeitung*, though the reporter had been sent for, and engaged at a comfortable salary to read the German papers and keep the city editor posted on their contents. The *Standard* alone had

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unearthed the mystery, and while its account was much involved by the free use of interrogation points and such phrases as "it is rumored" and "it is alleged," it was made fairly clear to the public that something out of the ordinary had occurred. It protected itself in the Arden matter by declaring that "if the facts are as Captain Wade stated to Inspector Harrity, it is plain that 'Edward Arden' is an alias. The great Dr. Edward Arden, who will go down in scientific history as author of the Arden theory of phagocytosis, was formerly professor of medical jurisprudence at Johns Hopkins University, but for some time has been residing quietly at Chantilly, France. He has not been in this country for five years." The afternoon papers of Tuesday handled the *Standard's* story very tenderly, being rather inclined to make light of it, and made it thoroughly safe by omitting names, but by Wednesday every journal in the city was in line, fearlessly giving all the facts and theories. Harrity issued in great detail an account of his interview with Wade, and while under cross-questioning he was willing to admit that the crime might have been committed as the Captain had described it, he declared emphatically that in his mind the whole story fell to pieces at that moment when his visitor had solemnly avowed that he believed in the theory of "useless rubbish." The attitude of

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the public was not one of alarm, but the interest in the disclosures was intense, any fear of a general menace from the Advanced Robberies Company, Limited, being allayed by both the police and the press. From the former came a formal statement of no less a person than the commissioner himself, in which he said in concluding: "If such a corporation does exist, the police will be easily able to cope with it and protect public and private property."

By Saturday all the facts in the case had been thoroughly sifted and discussed editorially and the conclusion reached by that conservative journal the *Standard* was typical of the general opinion. Summed up, it was that Heberton Wade had never been engaged to Lady Victoria Glyme, but had been seized in his house as he had described to a *Standard* reporter exclusively, and later to Inspector Harrity; that the wedding hoax had been perpetrated, but the return of the presents made it evident that robbery was not the motive; that a local gang made up of cranks was working under the hallucination that it was teaching the race a great lesson; that these men would sooner or later be caught.

"There are but two matters remaining unexplained in this extraordinary chain of events," said the *Standard's* leader. "The first is the part of

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the Hon. Arthur Glyme in the fraud and his disappearance, but that will, without doubt, be cleared up by time. The other is the strange absence of Captain Wade and Mr. Rollins. Both of them, the former in particular, are men of considerable fortune and education, and of the highest standing in the community. Captain Wade, under the influence of the gang of cranks, might have been won over to their teachings, but it is inconceivable that simultaneously two citizens of such character should so lose their minds as to accept seriously this absurd 'theory of useless rubbish.' We are inclined to believe that Captain Wade's statements, both to the *Standard* representative and to Inspector Harry, were a blind, and that he and Mr. Rollins are now on the trail of these extraordinary criminals and will bring them to justice."

But storms like this always blow over quickly. On the very morning that the editorial appeared a prominent bookmaker was arrested for the cab murder and a great political scandal became public, so that when Captain Wade was located in Paris a few days later, it was recorded in a few paragraphs, in which he declared that he had nothing to say, as he had done all his talking in New York. I simply mention these matters in passing, for anything that the press, police, or public might say could in no way affect the great company. Dr.

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Arden never considered such matters of prime importance, and while in this instance he had not taken the *Abend Zeitung* into account in planning the crime, once he heard of it from Wade's own lips, he foretold exactly what would happen and laughed heartily.

"My dear Wade," he said, "let this give you no worry. You did exactly what we asked you to do, and if this little German disarranges things for a while it will be my own fault. I had intended to read a paper on the crime in a few years before the Sociology Division of the British Association, but he may make it unnecessary. The whole company is safely out of America, so put away fear and join me in the smoking-room."

Heberton Wade did not appear on the deck of the *Kronprinz* that Saturday when he sailed until she had dropped her pilot and was bowling along at top speed. He had intended to surprise Arden, but the Doctor spied him first and came forward with a hand outstretched.

"Captain Wade, it is delightful that you are to be with us," he cried, as though the meeting were quite expected.

"A lucky coincidence," said Wade, returning the greeting heartily.

"Coincidence—nonsense!" Arden said, smiling. "But I am just as glad. I had been hoping you

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might sail on this ship—for, Wade, your conduct has been splendid.”

“Miss Arden, I suppose, told you that we met yesterday.”

“No.” The Doctor was honestly surprised. “She never said a word about it. It is rather curious, too. She will be delighted to know that you are on board. I shall tell her.”

Wade’s hand detained him. “I am not so sure that Miss Arden will be so pleased as you think,” he said ruefully. He tucked his arm under his companion’s, and the two walked the deck for a half-hour, in which the Captain told the master-thief all that had occurred after the company left his house. The interview with Harrity amused Dr. Arden particularly.

“I had a brief account of it from the Inspector himself,” he said. “That is why I am on this vessel to-day. My original plan had been to go to Montreal by train in the morning, but my curiosity got the better of my discretion and I stayed over to the afternoon. Rollins and I were at lunch together at the club when the Inspector called up, and when he told us what you had said and that he was convinced that you were out of your head, I saw it was no use to worry further and engaged passage by this vessel. You will notice, however, that I am on the list as Count Ardeni, which

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is an Italian title I have and find useful on occasions."

Wade's mind was greatly relieved by Arden's easy view of the threatened danger from the *Abend Zeitung*, and when they were sitting together in a quiet corner of the smoking-room he raised his glass and drank his companion's health with good will.

"Dr. Arden," he said, "I want you to know that I have only the kindest feeling for you and your companions in crime. While you did give me some unpleasant moments, as I sit here now and look back on the past three weeks I must admit that they are the most interesting of my whole life. It was an adventure worth suffering."

"Captain Wade," was the quiet response, "I want you to know that as a whole your conduct was splendid. We appreciate it, and we feel that it is no more than right that we should recognize it in some way. We shall give you adventure and teach you how to live."

"No more engagements, please," cried Wade with a laugh.

Arden did not notice this jocular remark, for he was all seriousness. "You may remember some days ago when you asked to be allowed to join the company, I refused. I honestly believed then that you were not properly qualified. That opinion has

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changed. You have been chosen. The other men agree——”

“But, Dr. Arden——”

Wade’s protest was cut short. “Please let me explain, Captain,” said the Doctor firmly. “The company wants all-around men. Your reputation as a sportsman at things like polo and sailing cup-defenders qualifies you splendidly in those lines, and von Kohlberg is sponsor as to your muscle. In matters of science and a knowledge of men and things you are deficient, but you can make those up. You can join some of the evening classes that Rollins and Knowlton are organizing at the Wanderers Club.”

“Knowlton?” inquired Wade. “Is he in the company?”

“Why, yes,” Arden answered. “Don’t you remember that he recommended Charles Morton to you as a butler?”

“I do remember,” said Wade. “That was a bone I was going to pick with him when I got back. But, see here, Doctor, I am not quite ready——”

“Nonsense!” interrupted Arden, with a genial laugh. “You are perfectly ready and fit as long as you are chosen. The company knows the men it wants, and it does want you. That matter is settled. It was settled yesterday when we heard of your statement to the papers and your conduct

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at police headquarters. We at once picked you for the committee that is to move the Venus de Milo from the Louvre to Trafalgar Square." Arden's face lighted. "That will be a great adventure, Wade, one worth living for, and when we work it out the world will sit up and rub its eyes, and begin to quake for its trumpery rubbish. It will take at least two years of preparation alone. The French members have to get important posts in the Louvre; de Marsay is already at work on plans for the air-ship, and it will require at least a year to build it, but when everything is ready it will be a dash. There will be you and Knowlton, Darborg, of Sweden, John Hodder, the labor member of Parliament, and Arthur Glyme—a grand lot to work with."

"A grand lot, by Heaven!" Wade cried. His friend's enthusiasm was infectious, and for the moment he forgot himself, and rose with a hand held out and eyes ablaze. "I am with you, Arden!" Then he lifted his glass and said fervently, "To the quick coming of that day when all men have right understanding!"

"We shall never see that day ourselves," returned Dr. Arden solemnly, "but it is great to work for it; it is great to be of the few who first saw the light, and began to wake the world and lead men to it."

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"But when the time comes, how high must the names of those first few stand among happy men!" said Wade, for he saw himself immortal. "It is splendid to think that you will be known forever."

"Nonsense!" Arden exclaimed with a gesture of impatience. "When the company's fight is against vanity, should it build a monument to its own dead? Look, Wade—when one of us dies his name is expunged from the records and replaced by a number. And centuries hence when children take up the history not of the world but of life, they will be taught that on January 1st, in the year 1900, Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4 met at Chantilly, in France."

Wade sank back into his chair, and eyed the Doctor in amazement. "And if I did a great deed that changed the whole way of life, the millions I blessed would for centuries hail No. 22 as their deliverer."

"Yes." There was a still smile on Dr. Arden's face. "Will that not mean as much to them as 'Heberton Wade'?"

"To tell the truth," responded Wade laughing, "I should much prefer to be known for all time by my name and address, though I can't see that it does make much difference."

"Just another human weakness," the Doctor returned, "the result of thousands of years of the worship of vain rubbish—names, airy nothings of

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names and addresses, as well as of gold-headed canes and pearl collars. You see, Captain, that the company's theory is round and full, beautifully complete, with no flaw where the shafts of ignorance or malice can enter to wreck it."

"It is great to stand with the company," said Wade quietly.

The two men smoked in silence for a time. In the first flush of his ardor for the great cause to which he was now committed, the Captain had forgotten that other view of the theory and its defenders, that one so thoroughly womanly and so womanly absurd, which had been revealed to him on yesterday's walk by Amy Arden. It was not his view, for he was a strong man, yet at the moment when Arden told him that the company was ready to receive him, Amy held his mind. Here was the reason for those vain efforts at protest, which had been overridden by the Doctor in his eagerness to break the good news. Enthusiasm like that was impossible to withstand, and at the mention of the great adventure that offered, the fascination of its daring, its madness, its companionship, Wade brushed aside the misgivings of his heart. But in the brooding quiet, the picture of Amy was clear again on his mind, as she hurled shaft after shaft at this full, round philosophy. They might glance off harmless, but she had hurled them with a vim

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that was disconcerting to him. He would be valorous, but discreet first, he said to himself, after much pondering.

"Dr. Arden, to join the company has been my one thought for days, but before I can throw myself heart and soul into the work there are a few outside matters which I must clear up." The Captain's face showed no trace of the nervousness he really felt at daring to ask a respite.

"Certainly," responded the Doctor pleasantly. "I understand that. You will have plenty of time. Our next meeting will be on March 1st in a quiet villa at Drachenfels on the Rhine."

"But I must have six months," said Wade firmly. "In six months I shall be ready to stand with the company forever. It is not a light step, Doctor."

"It is the lightest step you ever took," responded Arden. "But you must be with us on March 1st, or perhaps never. It will be five years before we meet again, and by that time the present generation of the company may be driven to hiding. You can never tell what will happen in these affairs." The Doctor broke into a laugh. "Suppose that air-ship of Andre's were driven out to sea, or over to Italy in a storm with the Venus swinging below the car. I can see lively times."

"But my first work must be to take out of France

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not a woman of marble, but one real, one of transcending importance to me. Do you see now, Dr. Arden?"

"Wade, you are a strange man." The Doctor leaned toward his companion, his eyes intent on the Captain's face. "A few days ago you wanted to join the company that you might win a woman; now for the same reason you don't want to join. Amy can have nothing to do with your course in this matter."

"I am not so sure," rejoined Wade with a smile.

And he repeated to Arden almost word for word his conversation with the girl in that afternoon walk. He held back nothing, not even that last desperate appeal when he had sought to dispel the Glyme illusion and then had taken on himself the onus of the fraud. As he listened the Doctor's face became troubled.

"On this I am fixed," said the Captain, bringing his fist down on the table in emphasis, "I will not join the company, sir, till I have won your daughter. My ignorance in this case is my good fortune, and I don't purpose to sacrifice my one chance even for humanity."

"You are well qualified to win her," said the Doctor, looking away. "Poor Friedrich! poor Friedrich—a man to be admired. I understand a

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woman's mind as well as it can be understood, Wade, but I never boast of my knowledge of it. What you have said convinces me that it will take two hundred years to bring the sex to that intellectual plane where they will even begin to listen to our teachings."

"Longer," said the other.

"But, Wade, that was good of you to take on yourself the blame of the fraud."

"Good? Nonsense! Was I to tell her that her father was a thief? Would she have listened to me explain why you were honest?"

"No. Not even if she had lived long enough for you to make it clear. But, Wade, your case is not so bad, once we fix up this Glyme affair. Now I want to help you, for I see that you are at present the only kind of a man she will ever marry. Let her choose her husband first and I shall educate him afterward. Von Kohlberg is simply impossible—he is too wise. As to your being in the company, she does not know of its existence."

"But suppose she found me reading Locke and studying the stars?"

"If a woman does not love a man enough to marry him in spite of his wisdom, he would be happier losing her."

"I shall take no chances," said Wade firmly. He leaned back in his chair, folded his arms, and

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looked at Arden with his jaw square and his eyes set. That matter was settled.

Arden laughed. Rising, he went to the Captain's side and laid a hand on his shoulder in friendly fashion.

"I like you better than ever now," he said, "and I am more determined than ever that the company will have you. As to Amy, I shall do all I can to help you, though the affair is difficult. I cannot tell her of my great work; for she would judge me in the light of to-day with that rare womanly intuition we hear of. Unless I thus condemn myself, she must think you have just jilted a fifty-seven-year-old Salvation Army worker for her, or else are a monstrous fraud. But I shall begin studying the situation right away. Perhaps she will give me some hint. Meet me on deck in half an hour."

He moved off easily, confident, as he would enter the court of a king or face an inquisition. Set in his purpose, the Captain whiled away the time with a recent novel, then went out on deck. But the Doctor did not come. Each passing minute increased his anxiety, and he paced up and down impatiently, never losing sight of the door that led to the cabins. The hour brought Arden, erect as ever, calm and unhurried, but his face presented that enigma Wade had so often known to lie there when

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the conflict of emotions was waging in the depths of his soul.

"Well?" said Wade, anxiously hurrying up.

The other gave no answer, but interlocking arms, led his friend down the deck to the very end. There he stopped and stood gazing abstractedly out to sea.

"Well?" Wade's voice was louder and insistent.

Arden turned to his companion. The conflict of the emotions had moved to his face, and frown and smile were battling there.

"The *Abend Zeitung* would out," he said gently.

"What?"

"The stewardess — the German stewardess — thought Amy would be interested in the story in last night's edition."

Wade leaned on the rail with both elbows and looked up into his companion's eyes. "You remember that you have taken the whole *Abend Zeitung* affair on your own shoulders," he said quietly.

"Yes," responded Arden. "It is the heaviest burden I ever had. You can't teach women! As Amy reads that infernal German's report, Heberton Wade accuses Edward Arden of being a thief — a gigantic thief — the greatest the world has ever known. That was what I was confronted with when I entered her cabin. She was like a dignified

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fury as she held out the paper and asked me to declare it false. I must say I never saw her better-looking."

"Of course you denied it," Wade cried.

"In the company we never lie," returned the Doctor gravely, "except in the actual commission of crimes for the ultimate good of humanity. The company will grow till all mankind is numbered with it, till children are born in it, and to be thrust from it is living death. Can we build a human structure like that with one false and perfidious man at its very foundation?"

"You pleaded guilty, then?"

"I pleaded innocent. And never in my life have I pleaded so hard, so vainly. It will take a thousand years, Wade, to bring the first woman to the light. To Amy I am either a man gone mad with learning or the most dangerous criminal in the world. To her Amy Arden is not the daughter of him whom countless generations will bless as No. 1 of the company, but the child of Edward Arden, who would be more properly numbered in the Rogues' Gallery. She says that she will be judged by the wisdom of to-day."

Never had Wade admired Dr. Arden as at that moment. Here, indeed, was the great wise animal. For him it was a time of trouble, but quiet as was his face there burned in his eyes the soft light of

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that deep-lying humor that is born of the love of life, not of contempt for it. Here was the man strong in mind and body, and clean, as rounded as his own philosophy. Here head and heart worked together in harmony. In him modesty fused with wisdom, gentleness with courage, goodness with strength. In him there was no anger, for anger is but childish petulance full grown, a wild offspring of fear and ignorance.

"We are both right," he went on after a moment. "The difficulty is that Amy and I are five hundred years apart. I had hoped, Wade, to instil gradually into her mind enough common sense that when a few years hence I made public the facts of the company's work, she would be able to judge it with some understanding. This sudden exposure has been disastrous. Remembering the theories that I have expounded in her presence, she can see the truth of your charges, but is blind to the glory of that truth. Now I argue in vain. She simply will not listen. She says that what I call unnecessary are the things people place the highest value on, and that stealing merely food and clothing is petty larceny compared with our crimes. At one moment I was Edward Arden in the year 1906, silent as I listened to my own daughter prove me either a criminal or a lunatic; the next I was Edward Arden of that great day when the whole world is

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in the company, looking pityingly and in wonder on this blind creature of the darkness."

"You have my sympathy," said Wade, speaking from his heart.

"My dear fellow, I do not need it," returned the Doctor, smiling. "There is some way out of this muddle, and I shall find it if I just think long enough. Meantime, I have consolation in the fact that I have never seen Amy more fascinating. I was never so proud of her as when I saw how womanly she was, how charming in her anger, how beautifully obtuse. Indeed, I began to have some misgivings about the sex in the future. It does seem as though vanity is as much a necessity to make a woman completely lovely as is a rich complexion or a good voice."

"You will, no doubt, find a way out of the muddle as you hope," Wade said with a genial laugh. "And I must say, Doctor, I appreciate your taking on yourself the responsibility for the whole Glyme affair. It makes my own future so much clearer. You see——"

"Stop!" exclaimed the Doctor, raising his hand. "In discussing my own troubles I selfishly forget yours. You have my sympathy, indeed!"

"Your sympathy?" cried the Captain in amazement.

Arden laid a hand on his companion's shoulder.

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"Remember, Wade," he said, "remember those grand words of yours to the *Abend Zeitung* reporter: 'Ich glaube—' ah, no, you cannot understand German—'I believe in the theory, I believe in the company, and my highest ambition is to work with these truly great men.'"

CHAPTER XXI

THE CAPTAIN TRIUMPHS

HEBERTON WADE sat alone in his favorite corner of the smoking-room, spread out comfortably on the softly padded lounge. In his hands was a novel, that book which he was reading in his dogged pursuing of his purpose to acquire a wife before wisdom, but light as it was it did not hold his mind. It was a rough night and the ship pitched through heavy seas. The cold wind of the north, charged with icy spray, was sweeping the decks. He had faced it, pacing the narrow cage, his body laughing at the airy elements, but at last the loneliness of it all, the low-hanging clouds, the sodden swish of the waves, the whine of the rigging, and the monotonous drum of the shafts had driven him back to the smoky cabin. He languidly viewed the scenes about him, but rather more curiously and thoughtfully than a year ago. Then he had regarded a varied company of men who were wearily, yet half pleasantly, passing the useless hours of a voyage. Now a like company was killing time, man's most priceless possession.

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They were smoking it up, drinking it up, talking it up. To them time was money, and they were spending it as foolishly. Just before Wade was one of these groups of spendthrifts, a party of five well-dressed men of his own class, men of education, sitting in formless heaps at a table littered with glasses, puffing away minute by minute as though time could be made by speculating in nonsense.

"That makes me think of a story," a fat, red-faced man said with an unctuous chuckle. "If any of you fellows have heard it before, just stop me."

They did not stop him. That is not good form. But they listened with blank attention, puffing and puffing, till the right moment came, that moment when he stopped talking, and forthwith they exploded with laughter, a death-rattle of merriment, and then retired into the graves of their minds. A tall, pale man came to life first—to his life—and ordered the glasses filled with a half-hour more of liquid time, which was served as ginger ale, as soda and whiskey. He then proceeded in a solemn voice to give in great detail an account of a certain adventure.

From this, Wade's eyes and ears turned to a company at his side, whose presiding genius was one of those souls corpulent in body and mind. He was a maker of safes who had blessed mankind

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with the strongest of strong boxes, one that would hold the greatest amount of rubbish at the least possible cost. His years had been given to the uplifting study of springs, bolts, welds, and locks. Now he was reaping his reward, for he could sit nightly before a bottle of champagne, with a huge black cigar in his mouth, and about him an attentive company of makers of unnecessities of all kinds, listening to his story of a successful life, how he had made his first ten cents, how he had scrimped and saved and struggled, until to-day his factory covered fifty acres and was weighing down every country on earth with its product. To him life's problem was how to make all mankind use his safes. Could he do that, his mills would cover miles, and when at last he lay on a gilded bed, in one room of his fifty-room house, he could look back to the hovel whence he had come and say honestly: "I have fought the good fight, I have won the race." He had kept the faith of a time when time was money.

"The demand for safes is growing constantly," Wade heard him declare. "The world is getting richer all the while. It is producing more valuables that must be kept secure, where moths cannot corrupt nor thieves break through. The spread of education and knowledge means the spread of safes, and as folks grow wiser they demand better

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safes. To keep up with that demand we employ the best engineering brains in the country to improve our safes constantly—to make them safer. The safe, gentlemen, is the monument of civilization."

To a view like this life would be well worth living when every man had a strong-box in which to keep his valuable rubbish secure from every other man. Wade thought of Arden and his dream of the wide spread of wisdom, of the coming of that day when time would be knowledge. As he turned from the scenes about him to his book he could not read, for hard though he struggled to hold his mind on the page which was his counter attack on Locke and learning, his vagrant fancy would wander down the years. Where before him was now the red-faced raconteur, he pictured a man like Albert, trained in muscle and mind, not telling ancient and witless stories, but explaining to a delighted company his photographs of the cities of Mars; when he had finished, a von Kohlberg had an account to give of some experiments of his to teach a child to break the bonds of heredity and acquire foresight as well as memory. There where the safe-man was unfolding the riches of a brain full of springs, bolts, welds, and locks, an Arden described his war on the one surviving germ that was bringing misery to the race, or a Hawkins recited

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his rhythmical sonnets. And yet Wade was committed to the wide spread of safes! He smiled when he thought of that, thought how for a woman's sake he must cling to his own mental bolts, springs, and locks forever—no, not forever, but till he won her! Then he would hurl them out; replace them with the treasures of knowledge. Till he won her? Wade frowned. For five days, each one as long as a year, pacing the deck or lounging in that clouded smoking-room, he had waited to see Amy. The minutes move with the slow, stately tread of hours when you wait for a woman, and it seemed to him that he had been weeks at sea. Even Arden's company was little solace, for to the Doctor also these were times of trouble. They had made a hundred rounds of the deck together, arm in arm, now moodily silent, now laughing in perplexity as they discussed the girl's attitude toward them.

Amy was firm in her stand for what she believed right. Her father's daily argument had destroyed her one hope, that he was suffering from a temporary derangement caused by much learning. Now she was convinced that his mind was clear and his heart good, but the world regards one two hundred years ahead of his time as far madder than he who is two thousand behind it; he was wrecking not only his own but others' lives; he had taken

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Captain Wade, enmeshed him in philosophy, and lifted him from the bliss of ignorance into the folly of wisdom. In vain Arden pleaded that the Captain still wallowed in the folly of ignorance. Amy had only to hold up the *Abend Zeitung* and read those damning words of his. She would bear with her father, to whom she was bound by every tie of nature, but she simply could not complicate her life by knowing a man whose highest ambition was to be a criminal to-day, even if a thousand years hence he might be hailed as a world benefactor. So she had kept to her stateroom, a self-committed prisoner, while Arden and Wade walked the deck, disconsolate, yet laughing, for they both loved her better for being so womanly absurd.

The frown burrowed deeper into the Captain's face. He tossed aside his book, lighted a cigar, and began to smoke up time as he stretched out in abandon, his head down on the leather back of the lounge, his gaze intent on the ceiling. The minutes went by, now as ever, with the slow, stately tread of hours, till a hand was laid on his shoulder and Arden's voice aroused him.

"Wade, wake up. The enemy has left her stronghold and is outside foraging for air and exercise."

Wade sprang to his feet, pulled on his ulster, and started for the door. Then he hesitated.

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"Perhaps she won't like it if I pursue," he said ruefully.

"I don't know," said Arden, smiling. "That is what I want to find out. We have had a long talk this evening, and it seems to me that she is worrying more about your future than mine. She declares now that after all the wrong I have done you, she can never look you in the face again."

Wade's eyes opened wide. This was the first gleam of hope in five days, but he remembered that other disastrous plunge of his and feared to act.

"She may think it brutal of me to force my company on her," he said, in a tone of doubt.

"She may," responded the Doctor calmly. "But men who are really considerate of women seldom win them."

"Then I will be a brute," said the other grimly, and he hurried to the deck.

Wade saw the girl, muffled in a great fur coat, standing by the rail aft, gazing into the black wastes.

"Miss Arden," he said, going up to her quietly.

Amy looked up. She did not speak, but regarded him with eyes neither friendly nor hostile.

"I hope I am not intruding."

"Oh, no." She spoke carelessly, and turned again to her contemplation of nothing.

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By her side Wade was silent, he, too, gazing out as though he could pierce the blackness; as though beyond the nearer sullen seas, beyond the close-drawn horizon of the night, beyond the low-hanging clouds, there was something that held his mind in fascination; as though above the sodden swish of the waves, the whine of the rigging, and the monotonous drum of the shafts there was a sweeter note to which he listened. She did not move. In this his hope heightened. The upturned collar of her great-coat shielded her face from him, and she stood so mysteriously silent and still that she might be wishing him either ten thousand miles away or at her side forever. Of this last Wade had no thought. Being there one minute he was blessed. As the minutes passed and she neither moved nor spoke he feared to break the spell by a single word. He leaned on the rail, his elbows almost touching hers, and looked over the precipice of steel into the black depths and waited.

"Well?" she said, just a little sharply, turning half around. It was after a minute to him; after an hour to her.

"Well?" said he.

The girl smiled. The man laughed outright, gayly.

"I am glad you did not run away," he said.

"Why should I?" she returned carelessly.

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"Somehow I thought you had been trying to avoid me."

"I would never try to avoid anybody. Why should I?"

"You remember how we parted on account of that dreadful Glyme affair——"

"And on account of that dreadful Glyme affair I have been worried to death, Captain Wade." There was no note of sharpness in her voice. She spoke quietly, looking him frankly in the eyes. "It is no small matter for a woman to learn suddenly that her father is engaged in crime, even though future generations may hail him as a saint. I have no interest in those people—those people a thousand years hence for whom he is risking so much. Why can't he be like men of to-day? He thinks he is doing right, but why can't he do the right of to-day?"

"Through church collections?" Wade interposed gravely.

"Yes—just like everybody else—subscribing to things, and serving on boards, and accusing other people of being dishonest. But he won't. Yet I feel proud of him when he stands up and seems to face the whole world and laugh at it and yet pity it. I am afraid—afraid for him and for his friends who are endangering themselves with him. There is Friedrich—I am sure Friedrich is in that

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company. He knows everything—he is centuries in advance of his time. And now you are in it, too!”

“No,” said Wade sharply, “I am not.”

“Did you not say ‘I believe in the theory, I believe in the company, and my highest ambition——’”

“I did.”

“You don’t mean to tell me you have changed so quickly?”

“No.” Wade remembered the words of Bacon which Arden had quoted to him on that first morning of his captivity. He remembered Arden and the company’s simple standard of honesty. It admitted no dissembling. He had planned to dissemble, to cheat this girl, but now that she was looking into his face searchingly, he could not. “I have not changed. But I have found that I still have a higher ambition; that I am selfish, supremely selfish; that before all humanity I think of one——”

“We had better walk,” exclaimed Amy, turning suddenly. “I am getting cold. Don’t you feel chilly?”

She swung into a quick stride. Wade was silent, for he saw by her impassive face that he must be content to be with her, and he grew wise, patiently swinging along at her side. They circled the deck many times; then she slackened her pace.

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"Captain Wade," Amy said, looking up suddenly, "I have avoided you."

"Naturally," Wade returned. "You saw in me a man who was advocating dishonesty and was ready to join a company of robbers."

"Of which my father is head," said she. "I have thought of that and condemned you for it; but first I considered the great trouble he had made you, that dreadful story of Lady Victoria and your imprisonment——"

"Which I thoroughly enjoyed," interrupted Wade, laughing. "Have you forgotten our dinners?"

"Forgotten?" the girl cried. "Can I ever forget my father making you his prisoner; then my going to your house to dine, my sitting at your table as a guest when——"

"You were there by my earnest wish," Wade interposed with vehemence. "The gloomiest evening of my life was that first one when you did not come."

"Then that dreadful walk when you took on yourself all the blame and I treated you so abominably——"

"The finest walk of my life," said the Captain with fervor. "Of course the last part was a little unpleasant, but I understood."

"When I understood, I never wanted to see you

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again," said the girl earnestly. "I fairly hated you because of the contempt that I felt you must hold us in."

"Let us stop here a while and puzzle this all out," said Wade quietly.

So they turned to the rail, to that same spot where they had met and stood side by side talking frankly as friends.

"Your father is right," the man said. "He did me no harm—only good. I do believe in his theory; I do believe in his company. I believe in him, and you do, now don't you?"

"A thousand years hence—yes," Amy answered.

"But I believe in him to-day," Wade declared.

"That is what has made me feel worse about it," returned the girl, with a gentle frown. "It seemed wrong for him to twist you up in his philosophy, and get you interested in robbery, and make you like all those other men."

Wade laughed. "When you spoke so cuttingly of those wise men that day when we walked together, I made up my mind to stay as I was—capable only of lecturing to small boys about mummies. But I can't do that. When a man sees a new light and knows that he should follow it, would you have him sit down and close his eyes? The company is right. I shall be of the company. I would be as wise as any man in it. But, Miss Arden, I

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shall remember when with women—yes, even with men of to-day—to talk of nothing. I promise you that if you don't avoid me in the future you shall never hear a word of astronomy or metaphysics and such things."

"That is good to know," said Amy, smiling. "Yet I fear you do not realize how seriously I feel on that subject. You have not been brought up among wiseacres as I have, and when after those dreadful dinners——"

"Dreadful?"

"Well, it seems as if they should have been dreadful, dinners with a compulsory host and uninvited guests—all my father's philosophy will never make me forget that or forgive him for it. When you would help me argue in defence of our foolish but precious rubbish, you were such a relief, and you delighted me so with your lecture on mummies and your sensible views on that walk, that I thought you a good, sane man except for Lady Victoria. Then she was cleared away, and if you had stopped there I should have remembered you as a fine, ordinary man. But you had to spoil it all by declaring that you believed in the theory and the company, and so had become as advanced as Father and Friedrich and all the rest. Was it a wonder that I was disappointed in you?"

"I find that you regard me in strangely varied

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lights," the Captain responded. "First you were angry with me, you avoided me because you thought you owed me an apology for the injury your father had done. Then you were angry because I did not see the wrong, but hailed him as a friend. Now what would you have me do—laugh at your father's theory and be a victim of the company, or join the company and be blessed by its wisdom?"

Amy watched the sea tumbling along below them. Her face was set with perplexity, and she did not answer.

"Come," said Wade, after a moment; "I shall do as you say."

The girl looked up. "I think you had better join," she said. "Somehow it does not seem as wrong to me as it did at first. Of course, I can't understand it all yet, for I am only a woman, but when they give back everything they steal, it is not so bad, is it? Then Father explained this evening that all the useless things we enjoy so greatly will not be taken away until we know so much that we cannot get pleasure out of them any longer. That does seem sensible, doesn't it?" She appealed to Wade with her eyes, and his eyes answered. She laughed gently. "I am really not so much afraid of you men doing anything wrong as I am of you being arrested. That is the whole trouble."

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The sailor came down the deck tying awning ropes. There never seems to be more than one sailor on an ocean steamship, and he is a relic of the sea, an ancient man who wears on his blouse the name of his present ship and on his cap the ribbon of that on which he last shipped. He looks as though he had gathered together the remnants of the world's real sailor clothes and was struggling feebly to keep alive grand traditions. This is a hard task for one whose duty it is to attend awnings and mark out decks for shuffle-board. Our particular tar was wandering around in the aimless way of his kind. He stopped suddenly, folded his hands behind his back, and gazed at two fur-clad figures side by side at the rail. He knew these scenes, and they always interested him. This pair was silent and seemed to have found something away out in the black turmoil. The old man made a turn of the deck, and there they were still, side by side, watching the sullen waves rolling below them. He heard one speak in a low voice; he heard a musical laugh; most discreetly he hitched away into the darkness.

"So it is settled," Wade said. "You won't avoid me any more and I shall talk only nonsense. But before I start I have something very serious, something that I started to tell you the other day, but you called a cab."

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"That was in Lady Victoria's time," the girl said.

"Thank Heaven she has gone forever! And now that you know she never existed, you will at least listen to me, won't you?" The girl did not answer, but looked straight out to sea. "Only one woman has ever existed for me, Amy. It was for you that I waited and waited, and that evening when I saw you first I knew that I had seen you ten thousand times before. The company might take all I had, but bringing you it made me immeasurably richer. You went away once into the air, to nowhere, I thought, but we met again. Then you fled in a cab, and here I am. I do not expect to win without a fight, but fight I will—brutally. Wherever you go, there I will be waiting—humbly. And something tells me, something out there in the waves that we have been watching so silently, the nothingness I think, that if I fight brutally enough and wait humbly enough, some day I shall win."

"Perhaps," said Amy. "But it seems sometimes as though I had only known you since yesterday, and again as though I had known you always. I must have time to think over what you have said—not that I suppose it makes any difference, but it is right that I should think it over."

She turned and walked down the deck, her eyes fixed on the cabin door, the man, much perplexed,

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keeping close to her with brutal humility. But reaching the door she stopped, and went back, to that spot where they had met. She leaned on the rail again, and gazed into the ocean's desolation. Wade did not speak. He had no need to. His fear was gone. He looked over the sullen seas, through the low-hanging clouds, past the close-drawn horizon of the night, into the nothingness, contented.

"It did not take me half as long to think it over as I intended," Amy said, turning a smiling face to his.

"It seemed an awful time to me," he said. "But then, you know, a while ago something out there on the sea that you watched so quietly gave me hope."

"That was when I made up my mind," said she, "but really I began to consider on the day when Lady Victoria went into the air, to nowhere. You know I liked you from the first, from that moment when you were carried into the dining-room, for you were not ordinary at all, and to me you never will be. But there was always the other woman. Why, if it had not been for her I might have thought that evening when I first saw you, I had seen you ten thousand times before. That day when we walked together, that day when you were free, I forgot her—almost. But she would rise before me when you spoke—the woman of fifty-

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seven and I hated you. Then I learned—learned how good you had been, and the more I learned the more I never wanted to see you again—so I thought. But when you came to-night I knew that I was glad. And as we watched the sea, you and I together, alone, I knew that I never wanted you to go away. But it did seem that I should at least wait till to-morrow—I should have waited had not that something out there in the darkness told you—and it told you the truth.”

“You saved me another of those eternities of days,” Wade said. “I have lived through five eternities, Amy, since the ghost of Victoria arose between us on that walk of ours, to send you away from me in anger. But I could live through a million such eternities for an hour like this at their end. And I forgive my lady now, I even love her, for it was she that brought you to me, out of the air from nowhere!”

CHAPTER XXII

THE SPLENDID TWENTY

IT is glorious to stand with the company! So Knowlton declared that night at the Wanderers Club, when I was aroused from uneasy sleep and sat up blinking at the light. Then I thought him dreaming. But when I stood before the splendid twenty, one glance told me how true his words were. These men needed no silly trappings to mark their station. They had no station. They wanted none. They could move with ease from court to kitchen; they could walk alike with kings and students; they could climb high mountains, and burrow into the depths of knowledge; they were men of the world and not its surface. They had fought their way out of the vast rubbish pile beneath which their fellows lay buried, and could breathe the pure refreshing air. I had but to look at the good brown faces, to catch the bright gleam of the frank eyes, to hear the clear ring of their laughter, to know that life to them was a game worth playing, for they had right understanding. So those three days at Drachenfels were

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to Wade and me worth years of the old time when we walked abroad with our eyes closed, thinking that we saw, because we could feel the bricks beneath our feet or avoid the wall that arose before us. For the moment the earth was beautiful, the playground of happy human children. Countless pleasures were offered us; countless fascinating puzzles were in the heavens; countless engrossing problems in every meadow. We were with men that knew them. And it was not school. It was living. In the villa of von Kohlberg, in the humble home of John Hodder in Glasgow, or wandering with Francis Brandon afoot through his beloved East, the company would be the same, for in simplicity and knowledge it finds contentment. Its one ambitious desire is to dig mankind out of the heap of rubbish under which it lies groaning.

So striving after simplicity the company lays aside all formality when it gathers. Only when we entered his house did Wade and I meet von Kohlberg as host. After that he effaced himself. His home was ours. Did we want horses at midnight to ride over the star-lighted country, we went to the stable, saddled them, and rode forth unharried by grooms. Did we come back with keen appetites from the gallop, we had intellect enough to find our own way to the kitchen cupboards without the aid of servants. But that moment when we entered

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his villa he was of hosts the most gracious. For Wade it was a moment of embarrassment, as the man who came hurrying down the hall to greet us was the one he had tried to eject from his own home.

"Baron von Kohlberg," he said, taking the outstretched hand, "I want to offer you my most humble of apologies."

The German laughed. "Apology—nonsense," he returned. "The New York affair is forgotten. We both acted like men of to-day. To-night we are men of to-morrow, and forgive and forget. The company dines at eight, so I must hurry you to your rooms."

Calling the servants to bring our luggage, he led us up the stairs to the adjoining chambers that we were to occupy during our stay, and while we waited for our bags, he drew us to the windows and pointed into the valley below, now cloaked in darkness, to the lights that marked the course of the Rhine and the far-scattered villages that hugged its banks.

"To-morrow you shall see one of the finest pictures in the world from this spot," he said. "I am sorry that we had to come here so early in the year before the season of blossoms. The country is gaunt now, but in the morning when we ride over the hills you will not wonder that this is my favor-

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ite retreat." He turned to the array of luggage that servants were arranging about the room and laughed. "You brought more than necessary, Captain Wade. I should have warned you. When the company meets we wear the uniform. You will find yours laid out in readiness, gentlemen. It is our evening dress, and you may be interested to know that it is just like the morning dress—just as comfortable, for it is the same suit. Now I must go and get ready myself. Look for me to return in a half-hour." And he left us, smiling.

Wade watched him, wondering, and when we were alone he exclaimed: "It is hard to believe that this genial soul is my old enemy, the soldier and metaphysician!" Then he turned to the bed and took up his uniform, a suit of rough gray tweed, and a shirt of soft white linen. "That is a sensible idea, isn't it, Jim?" he said, after a moment's inspection had revealed the beauty of the garments. "Loose coat and trousers; no waistcoat to overheat the chest while you have chills down the back; a soft shirt with a wide collar that will keep your neck from being chafed; pockets large enough to hold a volume of the encyclopædia. Now for a cold tub, comfortable clothes, and real life."

Wade's good humor was unbounded. Going about my own preparations for the evening, I heard him singing as he sat in the ancient tin bath-

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tub splashing himself, and when a while later he strode into my room his face was aglow with contentment.

"What do you think of me?" he demanded.

"You look like a well-groomed artist," I replied, eying him admiringly, for the wide white collar had taken twenty years from his age.

"Sensible, aren't they?" he returned, inspecting me from an easy chair. "Here in one pocket I have my Locke, with the marker at page 350, honestly read, thoroughly understood, and almost enjoyed; in the other is that ancient volume of Andre's, old Pascal. Now don't you think that for evening these togs are much better than those we wear ordinarily, the stiff linen with pearl studs that you always fear have gone into the laundry, and a spiketail coat that makes you look like a weird bird?"

I agreed with him thoroughly. The uniform is most comfortable, and when it is generally worn by men they must look back with wonder at the generations before them who burdened their lives with the sartorial output of madhouses. But at a time like this when the company is waiting we cannot diverge from the real business of the evening to the matter of clothes, even when they become in top hats and multifarious coats but an outward evidence that thousands of years have not brought us

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very far on our journey from apehood to manhood. Remember the learned Teufelsdröckh of Weiss-nichttwo—how carrying us through his monumental philosophy of clothes he brings us to this: "It is the Night of the World, and still long till it be day: we wander amid the glimmer of smoking ruins, and the Sun and Stars of Heaven are as if blotted out for a season; and the two immeasurable Phantoms, Hypocrisy and Atheism, with the gowl Sensuality, stalk abroad over the earth and call it theirs." It is still long till day, and we have far to go through the darkness, but the day will break. When useless rubbish is swept off the earth, useless clothes will go with it, an inseparable part of it, and unregretted. When I stood before the company I caught the faint glimmer of the morning, for looking upon the splendid twenty I saw that nine times the best nine tailors living could not make one of them appear more a man. Their skin was brown with sun and wind; the brightness of day was in their eyes; on their faces were the strong, yet gentle lines that thought makes, not the deep furrows that come of needless worry in the struggle for unessentials, or the feeble scrawls of an empty brain. They carried themselves erect, easily, as men do who can revel in light and air alone, and the hands that clasped ours in friendly greeting gave hint of muscles that were hardened for hit-

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ting. It did not need a Brummel's clothes to mark each one a gentleman. To be well groomed is next to godliness, and better-groomed men I have never seen than these in their simple uniforms of tweed, with the wide white collars.

Arden presented us to them in the great drawing-room, whither with von Kohlberg he led us on the stroke of eight. As we went down the hall we heard through the heavy curtains the sound of much merriment, but our entrance was a signal for a sudden hush. We stood still, facing them, they regarding us gravely.

Arden's voice broke the silence after a moment.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I have brought you Numbers Twenty-one and Twenty-two."

We expected a longer speech than that, a formal flow of words to mark so auspicious an occasion for us, but such was not the company's way. They came forward at once, and, crowding about us, welcomed us like simple friends. The babel of languages was at first confusing and we were addressed in many tongues, but when they knew that ours was English they swung into it with one accord, from French and German, Italian and Danish.

The Earl of Garchester was quickest to reach the side of Wade, who had last seen this splendid fellow wearing livery.

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"Albert—the polo-playing astronomer!" cried the Captain. "And how goes the study of asymptotes?"

"Slowly," returned Garchester. "I still search for some new equation."

"And Lady Victoria?"

"Don't mention that half-sister of mine," replied the Earl, laughing. "You see, she is somewhere in upper India, a colonel or general in the Salvation Army, and when ten years hence she hears of her engagement she may make trouble for Arthur and me for breaking it, but what is that to the good of humanity?" He drew forward a tall, powerfully built man, who no longer glowered. "You remember Hawkins, don't you, Wade—the Rev. Hawkins Grant, just elected Bishop of Wilmington in your country?"

"The surpliced Nimrod and writer of sonnets!" exclaimed Wade.

"And the shoveller of snow and tender of furnaces," returned the Bishop. "If I have to commit any more crimes in your house I hope you will have electric lights put in the cellar."

At that moment the Captain caught sight of a smiling Frenchman, just behind the sonneteer.

"Andre—I am sure you are Andre!" he exclaimed. "I shall never eat grapefruit like yours again, and——"

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"I am pleased that my cooking was satisfactory," cried de Marsay, taking his hand. "But I am only an amateur. I prefer air-ships to kitchens."

Wade drew from his pocket the quaint copy of Pascal. "I want to return this volume," he said. "It is so old that I thought it might be of great value."

"It is valuable only when it is being read," responded Andre, with a gesture of refusal. "Keep it. I have finished with it, and you may enjoy the excellent style. For me the more moderns."

Francis Brandon, once of Harvard, and now of Oxford University, the famous Oriental traveller and student, was at my side. It was he who at the Wanderers Club revealed the company's existence. That night he was Arden to me, for as I had seen Morton, the Doctor had to resort to subterfuge and send another to represent him at dinner. Billy Knowlton had him by the arm, and the three of us were bemoaning the absence of Lao-Tze when Wade spied him. He greeted his old butler gayly, and then turned to Knowlton.

"Look here, Billy," he demanded, "how long have you been in the company?"

"I am Number Nineteen," was the genial reply. "You see, I planned the crime in your house."

"We shall settle that later," returned the Cap-

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tain. "But I should like to know why I was picked."

"New York was the ideal place for such a robbery," Knowlton answered. "As I explained to the Doctor, the Westerners had been coming down on the social fold like the Assyrians, and the stock market was booming besides. That settled, you were the ideal victim, you a bachelor of the highest position and a fame almost national for no earthly reason."

"Thank you," retorted Wade.

He was about to open an argument as to the injustice of Knowlton's opinion, but he had to abandon the attempt because of the press of men about him. We met every one of them: Gaillard, who won the Paris-Berlin race last year, then sailed to America to run Wade's car, and now was back in his laboratory experimenting with radium; Darborg, of Sweden, who had hurried home from the polar regions to be at the meeting; Captain Odatchi, of the Japanese navy, who has written a book on the religions of the Occident; Gardiner, the American, who had made twenty millions in the manufacture of steel products, and is an expert wrestler; a prince of Austria, who mixed biology with statecraft; the Hon. Arthur Glyme, a yachtsman and chemist; John Hodder, of Glasgow, sitting one day in Parliament by virtue of the labor

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vote, and the next searching the fields for rare plants; an Italian sculptor and master of the fence; a Russian engineer in exile for his part in the revolution. Of such men as these was the company made.

When dinner was announced, we proceeded to the table without formality, the arrangement of seats even being left entirely to chance. System was unnecessary in a gathering like this. No one had fear that he would fall in bad company, nor was there need to put the horsey man where he could talk intelligently, or the maker of safes beside some accomplished ear. I did hear young Glyme discouraging on dogs to Pokitoff, but he moved easily from the kennel to the councils of state, and listened with keen interest when the Russian spoke of his own studies of the life of the bee. John Hodder and von Kohlberg engaged in an argument over the freedom of the will, and de Marsay forgot his air-ships and turned from Gardiner to enter their discussion with much vigor. The iron-master found on his other hand the Bishop recounting to Darborg his adventures in Central Africa, while the Swede repaid him with the fruits of his last trip to the Arctic. Across the table from me sat Wade, between Garchester and Odatchi, speculating on the possibility of communicating with the nearer planets, then suddenly dropping

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into a dispute of the respective merits of schooner and yawl rigs. Yet never have I heard laughter ring freer and truer than at that long table. The conversation was as light as air to those who were exploring all fields of learning for pleasure and not profit. To most diners-out these men would have seemed dull, tiresome pedants, depressingly wise, and not half so amusing as those who can talk glibly about nothing, but the lightest of novels seems heavy to him who can read only in words of one syllable. I had feared that I should be depressed by wisdom; that I might be cornered by some Gradgrind and buried beneath an avalanche of facts. But in this company there was nothing of the didactic, no trace of the text-book or the lecture. Each was a student of life, more ready to learn than to teach, and as students they bore themselves, gayly and healthily, with quick ears for the neatly turned phrase, or the jest that was trenchant with wisdom. There was no place at that board for the lean-visaged professor who knew one science and was deaf to the bay of the hounds or felt lonely in the brooding forest. Each had that deep-lying humor that is born of the love of life; each knew the joy of the clean, strong body and mind. All had forgotten for the moment the brawling game of shinny that the rest of the world was playing, and were basking in the light of knowledge. Environ-

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ment had no part in their mood. The pervading spirit would have been the same were they dining under a tree on bread and water instead of in the villa of the great von Kohlberg, for here the repast was of the simplest kind. First was served a wholesome soup to arouse gently the sleeping inner man; next an excellent meat with fine white bread and two vegetables; and last cheese and coffee. There was one mild wine of the Rhine vineyards, but many drank only water, sipping it with as much pleasure as others did the stronger beverage. Then when the table had been cleared pipes were brought, with large bowls of excellent tobacco, and the servants retired at the sign of the master.

Arden arose. At that instant every discussion was dropped and every eye was turned to the company's head. A fit chief he was for such a band! This man of sixty years appeared hardly more than thirty, save for the scattered gray in his black hair, and life seemed to promise him sixty years more. If days of work had dug furrows in his face, days of play had beaten them out, leaving lines, light but strong. His voice was deep, never hard, but always clear and resonant as though from a sounding-board. His smile was not a facial comedy but a broad drama, with a blending of humor and pathos, the keen eyes playing their part with the full, strong mouth and the quick, changing

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color. In every motion of the slender figure, of the arms and head, there were power and easy grace.

"Gentlemen," he said, "speeches with us are forbidden, for at best they are deadly wastes of words. For a man to rise and argue for some great truth is well enough—such arguments are needed in the world to-day, but where men have knowledge, what is right is written very simply in their hearts. The company reads that simple writing and follows it. As we grow the public speech will go the way of useless rubbish, and the day will come when men will read the great orations of the world with mute wonder that they were ever needed. But when we gather this way from every quarter of the globe, our work demands that Number One make a brief report of our operations. We are here for three days to plan our future crimes." The Doctor smiled at that word, and his comrades applauded him heartily. "To-night it is my duty as Number One to give account of the operation in New York. That intellectual robbery was conceived at the very first meeting of the Advanced Robberies Company, Limited, when Von Kohlberg, Garchester, Brandon, and myself met on January 1, 1900, at my house in Chantilly. Our first task was to get men to commit it. When we had our third meeting at Garchester Towers last year we numbered nineteen men, and the nine-

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teenth, our friend Knowlton, chose the scene and the victim or victims with rare acumen. The crime was committed. At that last meeting I told you in detail exactly how we should operate, how the victim would conduct himself, and the result. Recall that speech and you have my full report on the completed crime. Everything took place exactly as planned."

Cheers greeted the Doctor's report. John Hodder jumped to his feet and proposed a toast to Number One and all the numbers who had worked with him in America. It was responded to heartily. Before Arden could continue, Garchester called for the health of the chief victim.

"Captain Wade conducted himself as a man of courage and honor," the Earl cried. "He justified the judgment of Knowlton, and his own election into the company."

There were enthusiastic cheers for Wade, in which the Doctor joined, forgetting in his enthusiasm the Captain's close relationship to him.

"If you will bear with me a few moments more," Arden went on when quiet was restored, "I should like to say that there were one or two complications in the operation which we had not previously taken into account. One was the unexpected appearance in New York of my daughter, who up to that time would hardly let me out of her sight, and

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the other a philosophical reporter employed on a German paper. As to the latter, no real harm was done. It was my intention after we had completed a series of crimes to issue a wide-spread report of them. If you will examine the New York papers, which will be on file in the library to-morrow, you will see that the German journalist, having by mistake got the facts from Captain Wade, shook the dreaming city. It has gone to sleep again. The police are hunting for us in a quarter known as Hell's Kitchen. But, gentlemen, sleeping humanity has had its finger pricked. When it finds its beloved Venus and the crown jewels of England at the mercy of every thief with any brains, it will be aroused to the danger that threatens it by the absurd value it places on its rubbish of every kind. As to the first complication, the unexpected appearance of a woman among the criminals, you all know how happily that affair ended, thanks to the fascinating ignorance of the excellent man who is now my son-in-law."

The company was on its feet again, cheering. There were calls for Wade and a speech, but this outburst was quickly quelled by Arden's upraised hand.

"Gentlemen," he admonished them, "remember your rule that allows only Number One to make speeches. I will say, though, in behalf of Captain

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Wade that he is rapidly overcoming his defects as regards his educational qualifications. He actually finds entertainment in John Locke, which is more than I can do, and has become a member of the class in astronomy which Knowlton has organized in the Wanderers Club in New York. It may cheer you to know that there are now five men in that class. These club classes, by the way, are doing a splendid work for humanity, and I see in them hope for our rapid growth. Mr. Glyme tells me that in the chemistry circle which he has started in the King's Club, of London, there are now three men deeply interested, and John Hodder is training two botanists in the Bricklayers' Union, No. 33, of Glasgow. Like reports are made from our members in every quarter of the earth. But to return to the question of woman!"

Arden paused. At every hand there was evidence of increased interest in his words. The men stopped smoking even, that they might give him their entire attention.

"The sudden and unexpected appearance of a woman in the New York crime taught me a lesson. In our future operations we must keep our wives and daughters locked up at home. Under no circumstances must we let them get an inkling of the work in which we are engaged, for in but a few cases can we settle the grave problems they raise

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by simply marrying them to another of the company. When we began our great work, our tremendous fight against the useless rubbish under which humanity has buried itself until it can now hardly breathe, I was of the opinion that within one hundred years we might have a few women members. To-day, gentlemen, I am convinced that one thousand years is a conservative estimate of the time that it will take to educate the sex up to our ideas. I do not believe that in the world to-day there is one woman who would join if she could, nor one who could join if she would."

Brandon was shaking his head in dissent, and Arden turned to him with questioning eyes.

"I do know one," cried the Orientalist with vehemence.

"Name her! Name her!" came from every quarter of the table.

The great traveller rose. "Gentlemen," he said in a voice in which merriment and melancholy blended, "I am sorry to have aroused your hopes. She lives in Lhassa."

"She must join," cried the Doctor. "But, gentlemen, I do not promise you that when the company meets again this woman of Thibet will be with us, for I cannot promise anything of women where they stand face to face with our theory. Yet in the mere fact that she may exist there is encourage-

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ment. It would be peculiarly fitting for the company to draw from the East its first woman member, for in the East our theory was taught thousands of years ago by Lao-Tze and Confucius. But before we can send an expedition after her, we must carry on the work nearer at hand which is surer of fulfilment. We must not become despondent over the attitude of our wives and daughters, but find cheer in the fact that among men we are gaining strength rapidly. Five years ago there were but four of us. To-day we number twenty-two. There is every reason to believe that when five years hence we meet in the Bohemian castle of our friend of Austria there will be thirty. In twenty years we shall have to gather in halls. This is a marvellous growth when we consider the odds against which we fight—the ignorance, the vanity, the selfishness of countless millions. But it is a game for men.”

Arden had spoken jocularly of the woman of Thibet, but as he proceeded his face became grave. He paused now, and his bright glance went from man to man in the whole silent company. He took his glass from the table. He still spoke quietly, but in his voice was the resistless beat of conscious strength.

“The way to become a superior man is to set one’s affections on what is right, to love learning,

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which is the source of knowledge and virtue, with which nothing else can be compared.' The words of the great Confucius! He would have been of the company. In the company we strive to be superior men; we would throw aside useless trappings; we would find the pleasure of life in knowledge and virtue. Men are learning. The company will grow. A toast, gentlemen—to the quick coming of that day when all mankind is in the company!"



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JAN 27 1914

DUE DEC 18 1920

DUE MAR 6 1922

DUE DEC 6 1924

DUE DEC 9 1926



